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An Enfolding and Fertile Abyss: Rhetoric as the Creative Becoming of Biological Life

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AN ENFOLDING AND FERTILE ABYSS:
RHETORIC AS THE CREATIVE BECOMING OF BIOLOGICAL LIFE

A Dissertation
Presented to
the Graduate School of
Clemson University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy
Rhetorics, Communication, and Information Design

by
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May 2016

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation seeks traces of enfolding corporeal paths within the ontological, epistemological, ethical abyss separating “Human” and “Animal.” The “question of the animal,” as it is often called, is currently en vogue within a larger ecological movement in the humanities. I seek to extend this engagement with “animality” beyond rhetoric, literature, and philosophy by enfolding the sciences and arts as well for a deeper understanding of humans *as* animals and therefore, I argue, as *rhetorical life*. This path of the *HumAnimal* emerges with a diffractive reading of new material feminism, evolutionary biology, contemporary art practices, and visual rhetorics, and in doing so, theorizes a definition of rhetoric that is prior to intention, consciousness, and mind. I argue that rhetoric is instead present at the origins, struggles, and flourishings of life itself. Rhetoric becomes a process, a movement, and a biological becoming that emerges in nonlinear and discontinuous ways, illuminating the dark abyssal waters in which humanimals and animals are mutually and materially enfolded.

Given the ethical implications of our entanglements with the world, this dissertation further argues for a different way of looking with animals in visual culture. The representationalist looking that places animals at a distance and visually *grasps* them is demonstrated with contemporary examples of viral memes as well as the destructive human-animal interactions practiced for capturing selfies and “cute” photographs. These animals are but objects grasped by human eyes across a staggering ontological divide. I turn to Heidegger’s *Parmenides* to theorize

an encountering, being-enabling look for animals in visual culture that ontologically entangles humanimals and animals in the looking relation. Such an encountering look simultaneously brings forth an awareness of one's own being such that the abyssal requisites for self and other, subject and object, human and animal are compromised. An encountering look is essentially a phenomenological awareness of entanglement. These alternative practices of looking become the basis for a HumAnimal rhetorics and pedagogy.

DEDICATION

for Eric, Enzo, Myla, and Iris

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CHAPTER ONE

HUMANIMAL



Figure 1. Swan Abdominal X-Ray of foreign bodies (pictured in white). Kathy van Buer, DVM; 26 Jul 2007. Photograph.

...the re-visioning of our relationship with animals does not simply involve understanding animal life beyond its biological or ethological functioning, but also entails risking the human.

—Giovanni Aloï, *Art & Animals* xxi

“Humans” are emergent phenomena like all other physical systems.”

—Karen Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway* 338

In the summer of 2007 I was shadowing a local wildlife and small animal Veterinarian when a young Trumpeter Swan was brought into the clinic. His regal, feathered body was a unique sight amongst the rows of caged pets, squirming and yipping away, awaiting surgery. This beloved visitor to a private area pond in Illinois had become increasingly lethargic. Dr. Van Buer noted that he was underweight, “very weak and depressed . . . sick, not walking well, not molting yet” and had a swelling “on the neck area” (van Buer). He was transported by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources to another wildlife veterinarian, and I only learned later of the fatal bright white discs on his abdominal x-rays. This swan had ingested various discarded remnants of everyday human life. (Lead toxicity from a coin is thought to have been the specific cause of his slow and painful decline). Our material entanglements with animals, with all of life, are folded within these soft, permeable tissues of being—often unseen and, therefore, unacknowledged. It is this circulating engagement of our organic and inorganic beings and processes that puts the typical opposition of the transcendent “Human” and savage “Animal” into question. The abdominal radiographs, depicting the swan body in greys and blacks amidst ghostly skeletal structures, offer a haunting trace of these material entanglements and the dark, unseen depths in which we are all simultaneously enfolded.

This dissertation project explores the undecideable, abyssal depths between terms like “Life” and “Death” and “Human” and “Animal,” terms that have been taken as self-evident in Western philosophy and rhetoric. What follows will be an attempt

to entangle rhetoric and rhetorical studies with a transcorporeal¹ *disease* of the human as *HumAnimal*²: of the human as always already animal, as matter, and as *rhetorical life*. In contrast to the transcendent, disembodied thinking-therefore-being subject, “humanimal” indicates an enfolding material biological reality—an agential reality³—in which we are always creatively becoming.

The Human/Animal Abyss

We do not speak of the air between our body and nearby tree, but rather speak of the empty space between us. It is empty. Just an absence of stuff, without feeling or meaning. A void.

David Abram “The Commonwealth of Breath” 302

What fantasy of distance is this?

Karen Barad *Meeting the Universe Halfway* 396

In “Domesticating Animal Theory,” John Muckelbauer jokingly refers to “animality” as “the new fall line of theory ware” emerging within a larger ecological movement in the humanities (97). It is indeed difficult to distill the practical exigencies for considering animals and the larger nonhuman world anew within all fields. After all, we are living in an era now ominously referred to as the “Anthropocene” in which practices of human exceptionalism are realizing devastation on a massive scale, perhaps even propelling us toward a sixth massive global extinction⁴. As one example, a risk assessment published in *PNAS* (Proceedings of the National

Academy of Sciences of the United States of America) in September 2015 predicts that, based on studies in the fifty-year span between 1962 and 2012⁵, plastic ingestion is expected in 90 percent of seabird species like the Trumpeter Swan and will likely “reach 99% of all species by 2050” (Wilcox et al.). Anthropocentrism and its resulting blind actions of consumption and degradation have permanently altered the composition of reality. The “fantasy of distance” between human and animal must be traced to illuminate the very real material entanglements and corporeal folds of these two ontological and epistemological shores.

In History and Its Limits: Human, Animal Violence, Dominick LaCapra examines the persistence in Western culture for seeking a decisive criterion that separates human and animal and justifies human exceptionalism. These diverse criteria have ranged from soul, spirit and nobility to language and even laughter (157). Although many of the behavioral and biological “golden” criteria have been largely disproven over time, LaCapra remarks that the “bewildering heterogeneity of seemingly endless criteria used to arrive at the same conclusive divide attests to the force of the desire for that divide or radical separation” (157). Precisely what is at stake in so desperately desiring the “conceptual Grand Canyon that divides into two the deceptively massive categories of human and animal” (150)? Without *something* upon which to base a clean and easy cut between two inherently radically opposed terms, the systematic treatment of animals upon which the expectations of a certain quality of everyday life depends—in fact an entire *ideology* of human exceptionalism and animal consumption—is suddenly in jeopardy:

any attempted justification of a given treatment of animals (for example, killing and eating or experimenting on them) has to be based on considerations that are typically controversial and debatable, involving problematic normative judgments, that do not have the logical, ethical, or religious force—and conscience-calming function—of a decisive criterion or clear-cut divide in which much importance is obviously invested. (150)

The abyssal divide between human and animal puts this ideology at ease. It is a convenient rhetorical cut. In “The Commonwealth of Breath” quoted above, David Abram describes this apparent void of emptiness that opens between human and animal or the more general concept of nature as “a perfect place to throw whatever we hope to a-void. . . the perfect dump site for the unwanted by-products of our industries. . .” (302). I will explore these ethical implications further in this chapter and throughout the dissertation as a whole by attempting to trace this decisive cut and the abyssal space it opens.

In *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, Derrida seeks to complicate a clean human/animal distinction in Western philosophy. As Derrida suggests, while the question of whether difference exists between human and animal is not debatable:

The discussion is worth undertaking once it is a matter of determining the number, form, sense, or structure, the foliated consistency, of this abyssal limit, these edges, this plural and repeatedly folding frontier. The discussion becomes interesting once, instead of asking whether or not there is a limit that produces a discontinuity, one attempts to think what a limit becomes

once it is abyssal, once the frontier no longer forms a single indivisible line but more than one internally divided line; once, as a result, it can no longer be traced, objectified, or counted as single and indivisible. What are the edges of a limit that grows and multiplies by feeding on an abyss? (30-31)

For Derrida, human and animal exist as “relations... at once intertwined and abyssal, and they can never be totally objectified” (31). If we attempt to think this abyssal space and its “foliated consistency,” its “plural and repeatedly folding frontier,” we may find ourselves very far out to sea, plunging into the dark depths of the abyssal plains in the ocean—the deepest places on our planet, with nearly bottomless depths we presume to think and understand though they have barely been explored. These are spaces far from our view where sunlight does not penetrate, but they are simultaneously fertile, sustaining life and the entanglements of life⁶. These abyssal cuts in the Earth are extreme spaces, formed by magma that rises with the spreading of difference within the ocean floor, leaving benthos organisms—those that live in the deepest of darknesses—without solid ground. And yet the inability to think with the complexity of a “plural and repeatedly folding frontier” and its entangled biological materiality persists, allowing justification for “all manner of atrocities” (Derrida 26), including, as Derrida reminds us, the staggering rate at which (nonhuman) animals suffer and are killed each year in the euphemistic “Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations” (CAFOs) and other factory farming practices (the number of these annual animal deaths is in the billions, surpassing even the global human population⁷). Myths and legends of monstrous,

unrecognizable creatures arise from the Earth's dark abyssal waters; perhaps the humanimal can be amongst them.

Rhetorical (Hum)Animals

Speech would not have evolved among human beings unless rhetoric already existed. In fact, rhetoric is manifest in all animal life and existed long before the evolution of human beings.

George Kennedy "A Hoot in the Dark: The Evolution of General Rhetoric" 4

The abyssal rupture between "Human" and "Animal" understandably haunts rhetoric and rhetorical studies today. As Diane Davis points out in "Autozoography: Notes Toward a Rhetoricity of the Living," rhetorical studies has been a discipline that, "despite everything," traditionally presumes the human with relatively no question (535). George Kennedy in "A Hoot in the Dark: The Evolution of General Rhetoric" and then later in *Comparative Rhetoric* was among the first to suggest a rhetoric prior to speech and intent, located "in biological evolution" (4). Kennedy claims rhetoric as even present at a quantum level—at the very impulse of communicative energy. At the time of "A Hoot" in 1992, this suggestion of an evolutionary animal (and more generally nonhuman) rhetoric caught most by surprise and it was nearly twenty years later before other rhetoricians began reexamining this suggestion more seriously⁸. Since this reemergence, rhetoric has expanded its anthropocentric limits significantly. Rhetoric has now been theorized as complex, embodied, adaptive, preoriginary, ambient, strange, and perhaps even

possible within animals as well⁹. But there is still much to be said for animal rhetorics. I wish to expand upon what Kennedy began with “A Hoot” with a diffractive reading¹⁰ of evolutionary biology and new material feminism in theorizing a definition of rhetoric as prior to intention, consciousness, and mind. I argue that rhetoric is instead present at the origins, struggles, and flourishings of life itself. Rhetoric becomes a process, a movement, and a biological becoming that emerges in nonlinear and discontinuous ways, illuminating the dark abyssal waters in which human and animal are materially enfolded in what Karen Barad refers to as the “extraordinary liveliness of the world” (*Meeting* 91).

Beginning again with “A Hoot in the Dark,” Kennedy forms a number of theses in order to arrive at a genus of universal qualities of rhetoric. He bases these postulations on his claim that rhetoric is “a form of energy” that exists “in physical actions, facial expressions, gestures, and signs generally” (4). The first thesis, that rhetoric is prior to speech, is given with several examples of animal behavior: lions or wolves in a pack, or “society,” may warn of an approaching intruder; males of the same species may vocalize and posture in “signs of intent” for defending or overthrowing alpha rank; crows engage in a number of vocal calls that resemble epideictic rhetoric (4-5). In each case, “energy has been transmitted by a sign” (4). This idea of rhetoric as transmission of energy becomes the crux for all theses that follow. Given that signs (and the energy used to create them) can produce meaning without intention, Kennedy suggests rhetoric itself is prior to intent, which further allows for rhetoric as present simply in the physical characteristics themselves, as in

the color and aroma of plants that attract pollinators (10). In each of these cases of rhetoric as the fundamental energy of communication, it becomes clear that rhetoric is implicitly aligned with biological evolution and adaptation (Theses IV and V including rhetoric's function as survival of the fittest and its evolution through selective variation). What naturally follows is an emphasis on the rhetorical canon of delivery, or, at its most primitive, "physical motion in response to some exigence" (12), though all canons are suggested to be "phenomena of nature and prior to speech" (14).

Given the time of their publication, it is not surprising that Kennedy's radical divergences from classical definitions of rhetoric were met with surprise, skepticism, and even scrutiny¹¹. Indeed, Kennedy even goes as far as to suggest that, as "an energy existing in life" and therefore necessarily prior to life itself, rhetoric may be a "special case of the energy of all physics as known from subatomic particles" (13). Extending rhetoric to include animals, and—more generally—biological life, was quite the turn, but suggesting it may exist on a quantum level? How were serious rhetoricians to respond?

Research Professor of anthropology Jo Liska was amongst the first to seriously engage Kennedy's general theory of rhetoric with an article in *Philosophy and Rhetoric* the following year. While emphatically disagreeing with Kennedy's theory for its lack of "distinguishing characteristics" from any behavior of any living organism (32) and its apparent presence in the genetic code itself (34), Liska does provide a more nuanced approach by suggesting a precise point in communication

where rhetoric appears. (Another rhetorical cut). She identifies this point of evolutionary appearance on a continuum of animal signs between real (in a physical, biological sense) “symptoms” and arbitrary “symbols” in the realm of “semblances” (34). Semblances designate when a sign is of social significance and its modality voluntarily controlled (34-35). Her resulting definition for rhetoric becomes a “MANIPULATION of signs in the service of social influence” (34, her emphasis), which maintains the inclusion of animals within rhetoric—still quite a revolutionary theoretical event for rhetorical studies—but eliminates what she argues is the unhelpful grand generality suggested by Kennedy.

Following Liska’s critical engagement of Kennedy’s general theory in 1993, Alex Parrish’s 2015 *Adaptive Rhetoric: Evolution, Culture, and the Art of Persuasion* is the next to revisit Kennedy’s theory with additional insights from evolutionary biology. Relying upon cognitive science and behavioral ecology, Parrish establishes a more thorough “biocultural paradigm” for investigating the origins and forces of rhetoric. He argues: “To better understand the art of persuasion, rhetoricians need to closely examine both cultural and biological influences on human behavior, which requires us to locate the evolved mind as the production point of behavior and the nexus where culture and evolution meet” (2). Mind and behavior are critical points of qualification when arguing for this adaptive rhetoric, for Parrish seeks to extend the classical understanding of rhetoric as a discursive, situated, and intentional art to animals with scientifically supported abilities to engage in discursive, situated, intentional behaviors. Therefore, such qualifying animals must demonstrate, among

other things, 1) theory of mind as well as 2) rhetorical intention. That is, can a particular animal judge that a fellow animal has a mind that can *be persuaded*? And does this animal engage in an intentional behavior in order to persuade? These factors are, indeed, the most compelling in an argument for extending rhetoric to certain animals, but Abram notes how “mind—or consciousness, or awareness—is a strangely amorphous and mercurial phenomenon, one that is mighty tough to pin down” (302). The vague somewhere of mind proves to be quite tough, indeed, to locate. Parrish argues for mind, following Daniel Dennett and other cognitive scientists¹², by focusing on observable behavior.

There is a variety of striking animal behaviors that make it difficult to argue against an adaptive animal rhetoric, even in rhetoric’s most classically understood capacity as an intentional art of discourse. The argument that Kanzi the bonobo, who communicates and invents communications with lexigrams, and Alex the African gray parrot, who interrupts other birds to tell them to speak more clearly and answers incorrectly at well-known tasks when he becomes bored, are capable of rhetorical behavior is compelling¹³. These are complex, “minded,” emotional animals. To ignore these clearly intelligent beings capable of thought, emotion, and intention as rhetorical agents is simply to engage in human exceptionalism with little biological or scientific basis. But what becomes further excluded in the argument for qualifications like theory of mind and intentional behavior?

Parrish’s example of the cut that must be made in theorizing a clear definition of animal rhetoric is presented with the peacock. Peacocks may have

large, brightly colored tails that participate in the persuasion of a peahen for mating, but these feathers are not rhetorical until they are intentionally put into action with a characteristic mating behavior. In other words, the tail itself is not rhetorical until it is intentionally displayed for that purpose. But I propose that it is precisely here, in this complex evolutionary movement, which shapes phenotypes with the dynamic materiality of genes, of ecologies, of peahen bodies and choices, of a temporal emergence in which these varied and diverse factors become entangled and changed, that we can witness a creative becoming of rhetoric. It is in the formation, the continuous becomings of bodies as they inter and intra-act, that we see a dynamic, adaptive but also performative rhetoric of agential matter. To view these physical traits of biological bodies as static and immutable as they appear to our eyes, then, is deceiving. These morphologies and physiologies bear visible traces of the movement of rhetoric “in” evolution, as Kennedy suggests, and therefore within the fleshy contours and material folds of biological—rhetorical—life. Chapter 2 will expand upon this claim of evolutionary rhetorical bodies in much greater detail.

Entangled Materialities

...the body [is] the threshold or borderline concept that hovers perilously and undecidably at the pivotal point of binary pairs.

Elizabeth Grosz *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism* 22

Perhaps we need a new term to designate the hybrid creatures that we must learn to think of, a 'humanimal' form predicated on the refusal of the human/animal binary.

WJT Mitchell *Animal Rites* xiii-xiv

Referring to our human animal beings as the awkward mouthful *humanimal* causes pause and recalls our entangled biological materiality, indicating the inherent difficulty in distinguishing between subject-object positions of self/other, nature/culture, and of course human/animal. Humanimal also inherits its hybridity from a number of similar ambitious terms, such as Donna Haraway's well-known "natureculture" and Wendy Wheeler's "bodymind" (which I contextualize further below). As Jane Bennett describes in *Vibrant Matter*, that which is frequently referred to as the object of exteriority, the environment, "is actually inside human minds and bodies" in such a way that we are "inextricably bound" ontologically, epistemologically and ethically with all of matter (116). Suddenly our presumed human form, delineated by a smooth and constant exteriority of skin and flesh that holds the world—Nature or the environment—at bay, is plunged back into the dark and nascent unknowability in which it first forms. Limbs become almost indiscernible as we strain to make out budding contours: the hands and face that appear so distinctive—implicitly defining this species by appearance alone and holding it aloft in a hierarchical organization of being—are here acutely alien (acutely *animal*) in appearance. Life divides and folds upon itself while being further enfolded within life. The humanimal exists within the mysterious darkness of these

originary depths, and within these depths are still further depths of increasing micro-material entanglements.

This entangled biological materiality is frequently the topic within new materialism theories, particularly within new material feminisms and ecocriticism, which finds traction from recent scientific insights for “the materiality of the body as itself an active, sometimes recalcitrant, force” (Alaimo and Hekman 4). New material feminisms are especially appropriate for theorizing a HumAnimal rhetorics, since this particular trajectory of thought is not preoccupied with extending privileged human abilities to the nonhuman realm but rather with questioning the very contours of the human itself. In this sense, new material feminisms align with the posthumanist theorists like Cary Wolfe and Donna Haraway, who are reaching beyond humanism rather than beyond the embodied material human¹⁴.

In *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*, Karen Barad’s philosophy-physics, with its “agential realism” and diffractive methodology, has made fertile new material feminism by revealing the nature of nature with the phenomenon of quantum entanglement. Diffraction, she insists, is a more appropriate methodology for investigating reality than reflexivity or the optical metaphor of reflection, which presumes a decisive cut—an abyssal space, if you will—between image and reality and, according to Haraway, “only displaces the same elsewhere” and instigates preoccupation and concern over “copy and original and the search for the authentic and really real” (qtd in Barad 71). Reflection, this mere displacement of “the same elsewhere,” which relies on the

appearance of an original copy, inherently gives rise to the importance of *representing* the original. Is the representational image a satisfactory likeness to the real qualities it stands in for? This cut, gap, abyss can here again be seen to clearly divide between individual beings and objects. A bodily boundary is presumed to clearly separate interior and exterior ontologies¹⁵.

Haraway originally conceives of the methodology of diffraction in *Modest_Witness*, which Barad quotes at length:

What we need is to make a difference in material-semiotic apparatuses, to diffract the rays of technoscience so that we get more promising interference patterns on the recording films of our lives and bodies. Diffraction is an optical metaphor for the effort to make a difference in the world. . . .

Diffraction is a narrative, graphic, psychological, spiritual, and political technology for making consequential meanings. (Barad 71)

Diffraction, Barad explains more fully, is a real physical, quantum phenomenon most readily understood, perhaps, by wave patterns that create overlaps and superpositions—essentially “ontologically indeterminate states”—inherent to the wave-particle paradox that has made “the downfall of classical metaphysics explicit” (265, 72). The special “weird” quality of quantum phenomena, this wave-particle paradox, which throws classic Newtonian physics into an uproar *is* entanglement—and it is not something anyone can witness by standing outside, at a distance (this is especially significant in terms of scientific measurement and observation). We are each enfolded within these ontological states, co-creating reality as we participate in

it. Entanglement denies the idea of static, unchanging individuals or states: “What often appears as separate entities (and separate sets of concerns) with sharp edges does not actually entail a relation of absolute exteriority at all” (93). Rather, the most primary ontological unit on a quantum level is this entangled phenomenon and its “*dynamic* relationality to the other” (93, her emphasis). Furthermore, while diffraction is useful in its attunement to difference, these diffractive apparatuses “highlight, exhibit, and make evident the entangled structure of the changing and contingent ontology of the world, including the ontology of knowing,” for, as Barad explains, diffraction “is itself an entangled phenomenon” (73). In other words, quantum entanglement and the physical phenomenon of diffraction illustrate a reality in which all of matter—organic and inorganic alike—are ontologically interwoven.

Entanglement, as Barad explains, is a performative practice of creating reality that provides an alternative philosophical framework. Barad’s philosophy-physics is an “ontoepistemological” framework for conceptualizing reality that denies discrete states of being and knowing: “A performative understanding of scientific practices, for example, takes account of the fact that knowing does not come from standing at a distance and representing but rather from a *direct material engagement with the world*” (43; 49, her emphasis). Representation, on the other hand, and the abyssal spaces thus created does not account for these material-discursive entangled practices of being, knowing, and becoming (53). Clearly this performativity, which includes “being attentive to the iterative production of

boundaries, the material-discursive nature of boundary-drawing practices, the constitutive exclusions that are enacted, and questions of accountability and responsibility for the reconfigurings of which we are a part” is the methodology needed to theorize the abyssal entanglements of the humanimal (93). For this is a methodology of theorizing “exteriority within” and the discursive practices that *are* “the material conditions for making meaning” (93; 335).

Barad’s unique perspective as a quantum physicist and her resulting account of a realism that reveals a radical return to the “nature of nature” has inspired a number of theorists within new material feminisms. In “Natural Convers(at)ions: Or, What if Culture Was Really Nature All Along?” Vicki Kirby succinctly captures the issue of the human/animal, nature/culture, mind/body constellation of oppositions that constitutes the general concern of many of these feminist theorists:

The most important [assumption] is the assertion that humanness is profoundly unnatural. The abstracting technology of language, intelligence, and creative invention is separated from the body of the material world, indeed, from the material body of human animality. [...] If we translate the separation of culture from nature into the mind/body split, it seems that Cartesian subject can admit that s/he has a body (that *attaches* to the self), and yet s/he is somehow able to sustain the belief that *s/he is not this body*. This denial is necessary because to contest the latter and all its possible consequences would at least suggest that it might be in the nature of the

biological body to argue, to reinvent, and rewrite itself—to cogitate. (220-221, her emphasis)

An emphasis on the body as active and inseparable from mind also finds overwhelming support from the biological sciences. An article published in *Perspectives on Psychological Science* titled “Humans as Superorganisms: How Microbes, Viruses, Imprinted Genes, and Other Selfish Entities Shape Our Behavior” seeks to even extend this awareness of corporeal agency to practitioners within psychology, citing gut microbes, viral DNA, and epigenetic heritability as affecting behavior (Kramer and Bressan). Recent scholarship within the burgeoning subfield of biosemiotics similarly complicates any distinction between mind/body or mind/matter with some scholars even claiming body is itself synonymous with mind¹⁶ to such an extent that Wendy Wheeler fuses the two into bodymind (*The Whole* 18). Given the difficulty thus inherent in “locating the evolved mind as the production point of behavior,” as Parrish suggests must be done for a deeper understanding of rhetoric’s biocultural influences, it is understandable how locating conscious intent may be similarly problematic. Indeed, in “Natural Play, Natural Metaphor and Natural Stories: Biosemiotic Realism,” Wheeler argues that the theoretical claims of biosemiotics—“that all life. . . is semiotic and interpretive”—necessitates that we “radically. . . reconsider what we might mean when we talk about mind, consciousness, and intentionality” (69).

This troubling issue inherent to locating animal minds (and thus intentionality) is illustrated by a species of brittlestar, which Barad also discusses in

Meeting the Universe Halfway (26). The brittlestar, scientific name *Ophiocoma wendtii*, is an invertebrate related to starfish. This remarkable organism has no brain and no apparent eyes, yet it is able to flee from predators in a dark oceanic environment. The truly stunning nature of this scientific discovery lies in thousands of dome-shaped crystals covering its body that optimize and focus light onto its diffuse nervous system, ultimately creating an embodied compound eye with a 360-degree view of its surroundings (369-371). According to Barad, “Brittlestars challenge not only disembodied epistemologies but also traditional, and indeed many nontraditional, notions of embodiment. Bodies are not situated *in* the world; they are part *of* the world” (376). For Barad, the brittlestar is an apt example of her agential realist philosophy and the onto-epistemo-ethical entanglements implied: “Parts of the world are always intra-acting with other parts of the world, and it is through specific intra-actions that a differential sense of being—with boundaries, properties, cause and effect—is enacted in the ongoing ebb and flow of agency” (338). The brittlestar’s extraordinary compound eye and ability to drop endangered limbs when attacked—its limb waving in prolonged distraction as the brittlestar makes its escape—suggests an inherent difficulty connected with imposing categorical distinctions. Indeed, the brittlestar’s ability to drop limbs in “ongoing reconfigurings of its bodily boundaries. . . through which the agential cut between ‘self’ and ‘other’ (e.g., ‘surrounding environment’) is differentially enacted” (376) suggests an ability Diane Davis identifies as the primary criterion with which rhetorical studies bestows upon the human the exclusive right of the rhetorically

able: the ability of marking “I.” Davis explains: “Rhetorical acts are held to be distinctive human acts inasmuch as they’re grounded not so much in the power to speak (certain birds can do that) but in a more originary capability of self-reflexivity” (535). Davis goes on to argue that this ability is not simply situated with humans but is a “preoriginary rhetoricity” that exists as “the very condition for the identity and functioning of *any* living being” (546).

Haraway approaches this necessary relationality of being from a biological stance in *When Species Meet* when she rather poetically states: “To be one is to become with many” (4). Citing Lynn Margulis and Dorion Sagan’s *Acquiring Genomes*, Haraway describes the vast ontological complexity of being and becoming, which is never a fixed nor individual state, but rather exists as ongoing acts of symbiosis—of enfolding mutual relationships between organisms. “The *creative force* of symbiosis” also explains the most predominant theory of the origin of biological metabolic life¹⁷ (Haraway 31, my emphasis). Echoing Barad, Haraway says of this emergence of life: “It is turtles all the way down; the partners do not preexist their constitutive intra-action at every folded layer of time and space. These are the contagions and infections that wound the primary narcissism of those who still dream of human exceptionalism” (32). These mutual complex entanglements between shores are essentially questions of the origin(s) and definition of life, to which I will return more fully in Chapter 2.

Ecocriticism is an additional area of theoretical inquiry that has enfolded new materialism theories to strengthen ecological postmodernism’s goal for the

“reenchantment of nature” and its ethical implications (Oppermann 23, 35). In “Oceanic Origins, Plastic Activism, New Materialism at Sea,” Stacy Alaimo explains how the burgeoning field of material ecocriticism, “by definition, focuses on material agencies as part of a wider environmental ethos that values ecosystems, biodiversity, and nonhuman life” (193). Material ecocriticism is further concerned with the stories and narratives that arguably arise from such “creative force[s]” as Margulis and Sagan describe—this agential realism Barad refers to. Serpil Oppermann explains: “This creativity can be interpreted as a form of narrative transmitted through the interchanges of organic and inorganic matter, the continuity of human and nonhuman forces, and the interplay of bodily natures, all forming active composites” (21). The meaning created in onto-epistemological entanglements of phenomena is taken further by material ecocriticism to indicate “storied matter” in which “microscopic and macroscopic and even cosmic bodies display *eloquence*” (29; 28, her emphasis). Oppermann refers to the simultaneous particle-wave ontology of photons as well as the remarkable behavior of various bacteria as illustrating an inherent narrative to all of nature. These materially-embedded theories reveal how “every living creature, from humans to fungi” can be thought of as “tell[ing] evolutionary stories of co-existence, interdependence, adaptation and hybridization, extinctions and survivals” with a “formative, enactive power” (Iovino and Oppermann 7). In other words, the main objective of ecocriticism in seeing nature as composed of texts “conveying the signs and meanings expressed by material forces” (Iovino “Bodies” 98)—whether to be

encountered by humanimals or other bodyminds—is similar to my current project. However, in the following chapter I intend to show how a HumAnimal rhetorics is more capable of explaining a “preoriginary” creative force that propels this entangled becoming of “storied” matter by considering anew the embodied persuasion of parasitism, sexual selection, and the spontaneous order of life’s evolving complexity.

By theorizing the world and our intra-actions as new material feminisms and ecocriticism do, the “anthropocentric models of knowledge that describe nature either as a lifeless mechanism or as a mere textual construct” and their resultant objectification, oppression, and commoditization of “nature” and the “environment” are abandoned (Oppermann 23). The alternative framework of, perhaps, diffraction and its implicit material entanglements implicate an ethical responsibility to how meaning is created.

Why HumAnimal Rhetorics?: Becoming-With Plastic

I thought of the humpback in the dump. The whale as landfill. It was a metaphor, and then it wasn’t.

Rebecca Giggs “Whale Fall”

Choked to death on our waste, the mythical albatross calls upon us to recognize that our greatest challenge lies not out there, but *in here*.

Chris Jordan *Midway: Message from the Gyre*

A HumAnimal rhetorics read across new material feminisms and ecocriticism as well as evolutionary biology theorizes our ethical rhetorical relations with animals and the “nonhuman” world of which we are, indeed, very much a part. While new materialism is not new within rhetorical studies, a HumAnimal rhetorics uniquely theorizes rhetorical life as well as the ethical implications that spring from its entanglements.

In “Deep Ambivalence and Wild Objects: Toward a Strange Environmental Rhetoric,” Nathaniel Rivers remarks on how “environmentalism is *the* issue for all time: no other issue could be more pressing. No issue could matter more” (426, his emphasis). Rivers conjures a strain of new materialism to argue for a “deep ambivalence” and “strange rhetoric” in approaching this most important of issues, though he cites philosopher Graham Harman and political theorist Jane Bennett. The difference in our choice of theorists is significant. Harman works within speculative realism, referring to his particular flavor as “Object Oriented Ontology” (OOO), while Bennett examines how agency, or “thing power,” is created in relations of objects. As Rivers explains, “the relationship between speculative realisms such as OOO and new materialism has yet to be fully articulated” (429). While both these theorists work to overcome anthropocentrism and in that sense can be used in arguing for an ethical stance toward the environment, they may not be the best choices within the larger umbrella term of new materialism. In “Oceanic Origins,” Alaimo argues that the philosophies and analyses arising from both these theorists are problematic for an environmental ethics: “. . . Barad’s agential realism and my trans-corporeality

diverge—in ways that are significant for environmentalism—from thing theory, thing power, object-oriented ontologies, and speculative realism” (203). This is due to the primary focus of the listed philosophies on “encounters with discrete objects” and “bodies, things, and objects as separate entities” (195). Alaimo cites Gay Hawkins’s “Plastic Materialities” in which Hawkins uses Bennett’s “thing power” to argue in favor of the “affective intensities” and “differential agency” of plastic bags that are denied in activism otherwise thwarting their use (194). Hawkins’ stance is essentially one in favor of considering an autonomy and individual agency of plastic bags and against any activism that frames them as “destructive matter” that must be eliminated (qtd in Alaimo 194). Theories like Alaimo’s, on the other hand, “instead trac[e] how the (post)human is always already part of intra-active networks and systems that are simultaneously material, discursive, economic, ecological, and biopolitical” (195). In other words, “. . . discrete entities such as plastic bottle caps are, in a sense, already part of who we are, as human diets ontologically entangle us with the plastic seas” (198). And Alaimo uses Barad’s language of intra-action, the significance of which I argue above.

What is perhaps the most significant difference in using theories stemming from Barad’s philosophy-physics is her explanation of entangled phenomena as the most primary units of being. With examples from experiments within quantum mechanics—most notably experiments illustrating Niels Bohr’s theory of indeterminacy—it is clear that “objects” have no discrete, static, continuous characteristics (whether withdrawn or not):

... devices don't disclose preexisting values but rather. . . it is the specific material configuration that gives definition to the notion of the property in question, enacts a cut between the 'object' and the 'measuring instrument,' and produces determinate values for the corresponding measured quantity. . . the specific nature of the material arrangement of the apparatus is responsible for the specifics of the enactment of the cut. (264)

Barad may be referring specifically to scientific experiments here, but as she explains elsewhere, such material-discursive practices similarly explain all agential cuts and the phenomena (and values or characteristics) thus created. Practices, in this case particularly entanglements with animals and the environment, are responsible for the composition of reality¹⁸. For Barad, the constitutive nature of material-discursive practices like rhetoric—in which beings *literally* come to be—implicates an ethical responsibility:

Ethicality is part of the fabric of the world; the call to respond and be responsible is part of what is. There is no spatial-temporal domain that is excluded from the ethicality of what matters. Questions of responsibility and accountability present themselves with every possibility; each moment is alive with different possibilities for the world's becoming and different reconfigurings of what may yet be possible. (182)



Figure 2. Photograph of plastic stomach contents in decomposing albatross. Chris Jordan; *Midway: Message from the Gyre*; Web. Jul 2014.

Such is the exigency of theorizing a materially entangled rhetoric with what Barad refers to as an onto-epistemo-ethical framework for encountering the world: for “each moment is alive” with these possibilities of becoming. Given Barad’s agential realist account of how meaning and reality are created with “specific material performances of the world” (335), it is clear that nothing short of real (hum)animal beings are at stake in these relations. How we look, how we interact, how we engage with animals creates our shared realities. And, critically for a HumAnimal rhetorics, this reality is becoming increasingly composed of (and contaminated by) the careless waste of anthropocentrism.

Plastic has become “a key geological indicator of the Anthropocene,” distinct from the Holocene era with startling changes in geological composition and sedimentation (Zalasiewicz et al., Waters et al.). The swan narrative that opens this

chapter is not an isolated incident. Microplastics are now increasingly dispersed in the ocean by ingestion and secretion, passing through organisms in a shared materiality of humanimal waste. Reporting for *National Geographic*, Isabelle Groc explains how marine deaths due to discarded debris are escalating at a startling rate. Even small pieces of plastic or trash can be fatal if they are mistaken for food and ingested. Alaimo further explains:

It is well known that plastic bags look like jellyfish in the water, confusing turtles and other creatures. . . Their resemblance to food means that plastic bits, the plastic bags, the plastic objects beckon, entice, and deceive birds, turtles, fish, and sea mammals. Vivid examples of animals occupied by plastics reveal the unfortunate results. (“Oceanic” 199)

In 2014 biologists made a startling discovery when they investigated the death of a young sei whale that had washed up in the Chesapeake Bay: “a necropsy revealed the animal had swallowed a shard of rigid, black plastic that lacerated its stomach, preventing it from feeding” (Groc). This “long and painful decline” of another being arose from something as simple as the broken plastic of someone’s CD case (Susan Barco qtd in Groc). It’s hard to comprehend; this death was preventable. Alaimo provides similar examples; surely, such examples seem endless in their horror of humanimal recklessness. But if the ocean and its inhabitants are “out there,” and I am securely in the “in here” of my individual body with “an empty space between us”—a massive void or abyss separating our well-beings—then creating and carelessly disposing of garbage does little to affect me; then “environmentalism [is]

a merely elective and external enterprise” (Abram 302; Alaimo “Oceanic” 187).

Rather, new material theories, including those within ecocriticism such as Alaimo’s trans-corporeality, can be used to change the framework in which we begin to think of being. Alaimo: “It is my hope that trans-corporeality—in theory, literature, film, activism, and daily life—is a mode of ecomaterialism that will discourage citizens, consumers, and embodied humans from taking refuge in fantasies of transcendence and imperviousness” (187). In Chapters 4 and 5 of this dissertation, I suggest how this may be done with HumAnimal rhetorics in visual culture and pedagogy.

Chris Jordan’s photographic series *Midway: Message from the Gyre* offers examples of the devastation created in the wake of such “fantasies of transcendence.” Jordan photographs the phenomenon on the Midway Atoll islands of young albatrosses dying from plastic waste ingestion. As the organic material of their bodies decays, the shocking quantity of this plastic waste is revealed in an unconcealed crypt within their abdomens. Jordan explains how “nesting chicks are fed lethal quantities of plastic by their parents, who mistake the floating trash for food as they forage over the vast polluted Pacific Ocean.” The fact that massive quantities of plastic exist in the ocean is devastating, but combined with the image of these infants’ deaths at the unknowing, caring beak of albatross parents attempting to feed them is a tragedy truly difficult to stomach. And, as Jordan argues, these images entangle our own humanimal bodies in a shared material becoming-with plastic: “Like the albatross, we. . . find ourselves lacking the ability to discern anymore what is nourishing from what is toxic.”

In the lyrical narrative essay “Whale Fall,” to which I will return more fully in Chapter 4, Rebecca Giggs explains how the waste and toxins circulating in our environments do, indeed, affect humanimals: “[Greenland’s Inuit] women may occupy some of the most isolated and deindustrialized regions in the world, but sustaining themselves on whales had made their bodies into sites of concentrated contamination” (Giggs). Testing revealed that these Inuit women all had alarming levels of mercury and other toxins despite their relatively waste-free lifestyles. In *Bodily Natures: Science, Environment, and the Material Self*, Alaimo traces this widespread “traffic in toxins” via the unique genre of material memoirs (18). By combining autobiography with science writing and scientific testing, these memoirs create a startling image of the self as “unrecognizable” in its “vast, coextensive materiality” (23-24). More projects like material memoirs—where theory meets praxis—are needed for this cultivation of our coextensive materialities and the resulting unclear borders of self. For it is here that we construct with skin and walls and doors, with rooms and routines, the fabric of everyday life.

A kind of material memoir similarly entangles itself within the pages of this dissertation, its fleshy contours unfolding with each chapter. Now it takes me back to the floor of another vet office, this time with an animal I knew intimately, having shared my home with her for twelve years. Meadow, “my” “dog” (how true are either of these words that I use to attempt describing a being so dear?), was born and died on the floor. And it is floors in particular to which I return when thinking about life, punctuated as it is by births and deaths. These are the events of

significance that illuminate the thresholds of our existence—the interstices, abyssal gaps, liminal undecidabilities—and haunt the boundaries of what we presume to know. They haunt the human. For it is on floors that the contents of our corporeal bodies tend to spill, despite how much we may wish to keep them hidden within—to keep them from complicating with their filth the clean definitions and concepts we have sewn up in our skin. And it is with our feet on human-made floors that we imagine solid ground, when we have yet to find ourselves fallen against the porous earth and its organic contents of which we are ourselves formed. In “Regarding the Dead,” Michelle Ballif argues that “regarding the dead, guarding them, mourning them, is the ethical relation that makes any rhetorical address possible” (455). And so it is with the flow of these bodily contents and the spectres they contain that I wish to trace the foliated contours and make fertile the permeable material membranes of a HumAnimal rhetorics.

CHAPTER TWO

RHETORICAL BECOMINGS:

SEX, SYMBIOSIS, AND SPONTANEOUS ORGANIZATION

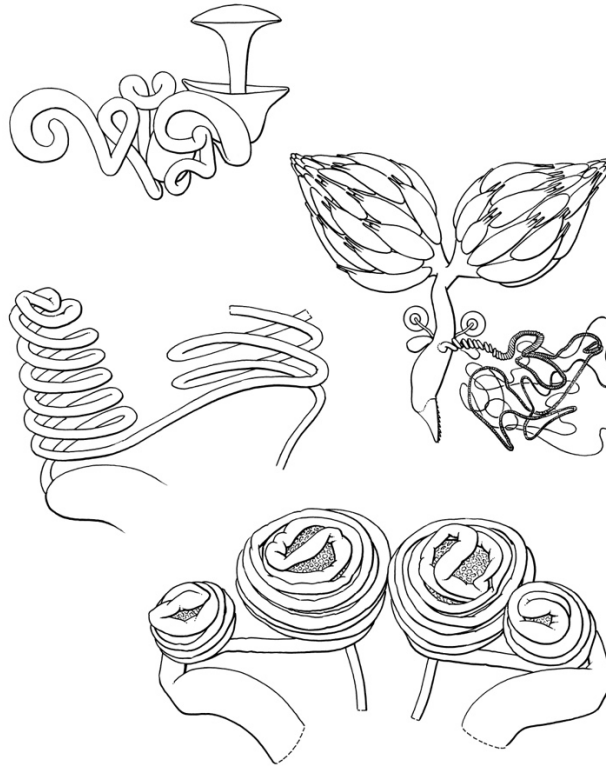


Figure 3. Illustration of labyrinthine vaginas. Menno Schilthuizen; *Nature's Nether Regions*; New York: Penguin, 2014; Print.

What follows is not a dissection. Rhetoric will not be bound and flayed, cut and drained of its life force in a sacrificial attempt at understanding its processes. I want to see it living. I want to feel its breath. Perhaps this is the most important distinction to make as I conjure a HumAnimal haunting of rhetoric from dark, abyssal depths, because these depths are fertile. I am following this HumAnimal rhetorics like I follow my fetal bud of a tail—unable to grasp it while catching an always fleeting glimpse. This glimpse of a movement, a flurry or flourish, disappearing into the dark—the dark that

is behind me, underneath me, inside me—is all that I can seek. I want it living, so I must follow and conjure the dead.

Intelligibility is not an inherent characteristic of humans but a feature of the world in its differential becoming. The world articulates itself differently.

Karen Barad *Meeting the Universe Halfway* 335

At the edge of the jungle was a seam, a dense shedding of light green ribbons of bark. A place where things previously separated moved together in a wet pivot. I stood and walked towards it in a dream.

Bhanu Kapil *Humanimal* 6

Perhaps evolution, as a gradient against which to read rhetorical studies, is a surprising choice. In the introduction to Alex Parrish's *Adaptive Rhetoric: Evolution, Culture, and the Art of Persuasion*, Parrish addresses the surprise and misunderstanding he faced explaining a project that incorporates biological influences on persuasion. To thwart similar charges of “biological reductionism” or determinism, it is worthwhile to take a moment to explain this perhaps unusual choice in the current project. The methodology of diffraction, described in the previous chapter, explains how this alternative optical metaphor is beneficial for discovering productive differences—“differences that make a difference”—between and within (as superpositions) forms of knowledge. Evolutionary biology has been chosen as one of these productive forms of knowledge for several reasons. First, as

Virginia Morell explains in *Animal Wise: The Thoughts and Emotions of Our Fellow Creatures*, Darwin's theory of evolution in *On the Origin of Species* "presented a solution to [the] impasse" between "philosophers and theologians who saw humans as the product of a special creation and therefore completely separate from other animals" on one side and "thinkers who argued that there were sufficient similarities between people and animals" on the other (10). Darwin's evolutionary biology submits compelling evidence that humans *are also* animals, thus collapsing, in quite a revolutionary fashion, the massive gulf between what was (and still often is) passionately viewed as two radically different categories of beings. In other words, evolution traces the entanglement of biological life. In "Darwin and Feminism," Elizabeth Grosz confirms this when she outlines seven benefits for feminism in engaging with evolutionary theory, one being that evolution allows "a way of reconceptualizing the relations between the natural and the social, between the biological and the cultural, outside the dichotomous structure in which these terms are currently enmeshed" (43). Outside this dichotomous structure, Darwin has no problem describing the intelligence and emotions of animals on a continuum with the evolution of humans, particularly in *The Expression of Emotions in Man and Animals*.

In "Beyond the Human/Non-Human Animal Dichotomy: The Philosophical Problem of *Human Animality*," Felice Cimatti calls human animality "a goal for the philosophy of the future," particularly due to its "theoretical and practical consequences [that] extend themselves to economics, ecology, and ethics." Couze

Venn reaches a similar conclusion in “Individuation, Relationality, Affect: Rethinking the Human in Relation to the Living”:

the new problematic of life enjoins us to rethink the standpoint of singularity rather than the individual, and of relationality as a principle of enabling us to think self-other, human-animal, nature-culture and human-world in terms of compossibility and complex becoming—with important implications regarding responsibility for the other . . . (142)

I believe that understanding the complexity of biological life and its variety of brilliant and bizarre entanglements is essential to making any judgments about the ontological status of living beings, and judgments are what motivate the meanings we receive and create. Judgments lay the groundwork for the everyday choices that are taken as a given and are no longer closely evaluated for their justifications. Reality is created and changed based on these judgments. Evolution and its various mechanisms and processes in which radical variations exist and intertwine provide the best way of seeing this entangled complexity of biological bodies to get an understanding of our shared humanimal materiality.

New material feminists and ecocritics like Haraway, Grosz, Alaimo, and Iovino have returned to bodies (and their inherent biology) as dynamic and changing matter rather than determinant, static, and immutable. These theories emphasize relationality, engagements, and entangled performances of materiality rather than individuals and their “separately determined properties” (Barad *Meeting* 55). Indeed, Barad argues that static qualities of an individual do not exist

even at the most fundamental level of reality. In other words, realism does not have to be “saddled with essentialism,” as many assume (55). Rather, in Barad’s words, “experimenting and theorizing are dynamic practices that play a constitutive role in the production of objects and subjects and matter and meaning” (56). These entangled phenomena, in which reality and its characteristics are created, are agential cuts that simultaneously exclude as they entangle, and “these exclusions foreclose determinism” (Barad “Matter”). Grosz remarks on this point as well, explaining how evolution “signals an open-ended becoming, a mode of potentially infinite transformation” (“Darwin” 25). Rather than indicating an inherent determinism in our very real biological materialities, evolution “offers a subtle and complex critique of both essentialism and teleology” with a “*genesis of the new* from the play of repetition and difference within the old” (28, 29, her emphasis). Ontologically speaking, our cells continuously regenerate; genes are in dynamic relations with material environments, viruses, toxins, and nutrients; the matter we take in and expel, that circulates inside and outside, forms and reforms our own material compositions. A return to evolutionary biology, read with Barad’s agential realism, is not synonymous with biological determinism. Rather, it is an acknowledgement of our complex materiality, which we share with all of biological life—indeed, all of the universe.

Before embarking on this chase in which a sketch of HumAnimal rhetorics is attempted, let me pause to provide a quick sketch of evolution and how it complements new materialism. Most are probably familiar with Darwin’s definition

of evolution—essentially descent with modification via natural selection—but perhaps it would be beneficial to illuminate some of the more misunderstood aspects. Often, in realizing that evolution entails heritable traits, a very linear or hierarchical image of various animal forms is brought to mind. However, evolution *is neither* linear *nor* hierarchical; it is divergent. Nor is it progressive or goal-oriented. Even as evolution manifests novel forms, it cannot *reach* for a more perfect organism or a more perfect trait of an organism. Selection can only work with the stuff of life that already exists. Evolution is also conservative, such that genes and characteristics are often found engaging in multiple roles and across multiple species. For this reason, as Morell explains, given that we share similar cognitive structures and chemical signals with vertebrates in particular, it is most assuredly the case that animals experience similar emotions and cognitive states just as Darwin imagined. Perhaps even more amazingly, evolution is also convergent. That is, one trait may evolve multiple times in different species that are not at all closely related. A common example of convergent evolution is the eye, which has evolved separately and differently in many species. One of my favorite examples of convergent evolution is the act of play and problem solving in cephalopods. Cephalopods like octopuses and squids are invertebrates whose most recent common ancestor with vertebrates like ourselves existed about 600 million years ago. And yet, these remarkable creatures with doughnut-shaped brains that “surround the[ir] esophagus” have “surprisingly vertebrate-like behaviors” (Vitti 396). Octopus and cuttlefish have been shown to succeed in associative learning, use

tools, and possibly even learn by observation—an impressive array of abilities in animals so radically different from us in terms of evolution (396).

Evolution and its various mechanisms are unique, because they allow us to see the histories and the complexities of how life is interwoven. Individuals and populations of individuals are condensations of this process, forming entangled *Umwelten*¹. Evolution is an enactment between and within species and their environments; it is an entangled ontological performance of becoming. Characteristics we are able to witness around us have emerged out of this very real process of matter-ing, and the examples of our material entanglements with all of life are as remarkable as they are vast and numerous. We are riddled with microorganisms throughout our bodies such that we would not survive without them. The toxins in our bodies tell stories about where we were born and where we have been. Mothers have been found to retain DNA in their bodies from their children long after giving birth. We are composed of multitudes. These material entanglements, in which life is born in foliated patterns of difference, blooming out and folding back upon itself, are traced with evolution. And while selection processes are essentially “mindless,” I intend to show how rhetoric manifests itself in these movements of life.

An Adaptive Rhetoric

The new is the generation of a productive monstrosity, the deformation and transformation of prevailing models and norms, so that what has been

unrecognized in the past and present, as well as what deformations the present can sustain, will elaborate themselves in the future.

Elizabeth Grosz "Darwin and Feminism" 43

Parrish's *Adaptive Rhetoric* is significant; for it is the first book-length project to argue for the rhetorical abilities of animals, and he does so with evolution. Upon reading Parrish's account of an adaptive rhetoric—one with first principles and prescriptive limits within which an "adequate" definition of rhetoric is sought—it is clear that there is not one way to theorize rhetoric against the gradient of evolutionary biology. An example of the differences between Parrish's adaptive rhetoric and my HumAnimal rhetorics is given in a question Parrish asks while closely examining the specimen of rhetoric with his adaptive lens. Essentially, he asks, if we consider rhetoric as adaptive—that is, evolutionarily advantageous—then "what does rhetoric *replace* that was less effective for the creatures that did not practice rhetoric?" (44, my emphasis). Here rhetoric is a possession or characteristic added into the toolbox of fitness, whereas I argue that rhetoric is inscribed within the movement and enactment of evolution itself. Parrish's suggestion is a good one: the costs of rhetorical behavior are likely significantly less for animals who use it to avoid physical confrontation. This adaptive theory recalls Wayne Booth's claim that "good rhetoric is our only, or at least our main, *alternative* to war" (241, his emphasis). Adaptive rhetoric, in this instance, separates direct embodied relationality, though its success and effects are often most certainly physical.

Other possible reasons for the evolution of a behavioral rhetoric in animals, as outlined by Parrish, include common uses in humans: to “enhance cooperation within a group,” as “a method for convincing potential mates to breed,” as a “gossip function” in social groups, or as a way of “establish[ing] prestige or political power in a group” (46). This emphasis on adaptive behavior is Parrish’s attempt to find “solid ground” from which to develop a more adequate definition for rhetoric (in contrast to Kennedy) within a biocultural paradigm (46). The working definition formulated, admittedly with further nuance throughout the book, tests out this solid ground: “It may be safe to say that rhetoric is the intentional communicative act of an animal whose purpose is to inform, or to manipulate the behavior of, one or more members of a real or imagined category of hearers called ‘audience’” (48). The equivalent of audience in the animal domain of persuasion is further developed with evolutionary psychology’s “theory of mind,” which names the “ability to attribute beliefs to other minds” (104). In other words, theory of mind is an exclusive mental capacity of some animals *to theorize* that other animals *have* mental states and can *be* persuaded. This, being adaptive, obviously also applies to human animals as well.

Theory of mind is an interesting concept within evolutionary psychology, and there are many animals that arguably demonstrate this ability, not least of which are dolphins and elephants—two species among others who can recognize themselves as individuals—as *self*—in mirror tests. The scrub jay’s food caching and re-caching behavior is a striking (possible) example of theory of mind in corvids. Scrub jays seem to anticipate the likely thieving behavior of other jays and will return to and

rebury food stashes they previously buried when in the presence of other jays. Behavior like this, which seems to demonstrate knowledge of an other's thoughts, is compelling; but the problem I see is what gets lost when something like theory of mind, an admittedly significant concept, is selected as a threshold for definitions. Here is the new line that has been drawn: theory of mind. It does not separate humans and animals, but it separates the "haves" of rhetorical ability from the "have-nots." For example, a study published about scrub jays' caching behavior in 2012 persuasively argues that such "sophisticated social cognition" as theory of mind is not a necessary prerequisite for food re-caching, citing mere stress (from conditions such as "poor habitat quality" and "light body weight") as another possibility (van der Vaart et al.). What, then, are we to make of the scrub jays' rhetorical abilities, given Parrish's definition? This study, which argues against theory of mind in scrub jays, can also be imagined to severely limit the rhetorical behaviors within the human species². Perhaps true rhetorical behaviors (those limited to intention and theory of mind) would be limited based on the contexts in which they occur (those contexts initiated by stress being excluded), but then who decides the status of a behavior's intentionality and theory-of-mind enactment? Often we are unaware of even our own intentions.

Cuts and definitions are a necessary part of making sense of the world. Indeed, according to Barad, such cuts constitute the fundamental units of reality from which we cannot be disentangled. And these decisions have important ethical implications; Barad describes an agential realism in which "ethicity is part of the

fabric of the world” (*Meeting* 182). In *What is Posthumanism?*, Cary Wolfe examines how Daniel Dennett’s functionalist approach to theorizing mind in humans and animals leads Dennett to the conclusion that only some beings with specific capacities can be said to suffer (even some humans are excluded from this). Such a conclusion about *who can suffer* obviously has important ethical implications and illustrates how careful we need to be when making cuts and exclusions. It is worthwhile to investigate the assumptions responsible for these exclusions, since they do have such a grounding effect on how we interpret reality and make meaning. Parrish does a great job of demonstrating a careful and thorough reading of rhetoric as adaptive. Intention and theory of mind are well supported with scientific study and well theorized as applicable to rhetoric in the capacity in which Parrish frames it. I simply wish to suggest that these clean distinctions are actually uneasy lines within which much more entangled rhetorical relationalities are at work. Parrish’s adaptive rhetoric describes a behavioral ability. A HumAnimal rhetorics reaches for more.

Just as there is not one theory of evolution, there is not one theory of rhetoric, and issues with intention and mind are not new to rhetorical studies. In *Ambient Rhetoric: The Attunements of Rhetorical Being*, Thomas Rickert sums up my position when he describes a definition of rhetoric without prescribed borders that can encompass narrower versions “without in any way being limited to [them]” (35). Rickert’s flavor of rhetoric informs a HumAnimal rhetorics as well:

Instead of being only the most conscious, willed aspects of motivated discursive production, rhetoric reveals and constitutes the informational environment within which we flourish, even as it works in and through both the existent informational situation and the local material environs. Rhetoric is thereby the emergent result of many complexly interacting agents dynamically attuned and exposed to one another, an attunement that may be as competitive as it is cooperative as long as it maintains an ecological relation or connectedness to the world round-about. This is a rhetoric dispersed, embodied, and embedded, one no longer mired in subjectivism and all the epistemological and ethical problems that ensue therefrom. (34)

An ambient rhetoric “dispersed, embodied, and embedded” is “itself ontological” (xv). More restrictive definitions, which presume intent as a (human or animal) requirement, “no longer suffice to determine what is rhetoric and what is not” (36). The “nebulous concept” of mind as the origin of rhetoric similarly betrays the extent to which minds are embodied and dispersed (and entangled) in the world (40-43). An ambient rhetoric, as an ongoing “disclosure of the world” in which things simultaneously withdraw as they are unconcealed to us in attunement, has much in common with Barad’s agential cuts of reality that create entangled phenomena. Exclusions of the world (or universe) apply both when we are attuned and entangled; but the crucial common factor they share is the ongoing, dynamic movement in which new attunements and entanglements are possible. Reality can be realigned or reconfigured with both. While Rickert opens rhetoric to the

possibilities beyond life itself, stating that rhetoric is not “only evolutionary” (xiv), a HumAnimal rhetorics more thoroughly traces what it might mean to have a rhetoric that *is* evolutionary, something that has yet to be properly conceived and is urgently needed.

In *Adaptive Rhetoric*, Parrish owns up to how his definition discriminates in favor of intention and animal life, explaining that these discriminations arise from a view that “rhetoric is in many ways a matter of competing and cooperating interests” (51). A HumAnimal rhetorics obviously also favors life, and initially this may be surprising considering this project’s influence from Barad’s quantum entanglement; clearly, life is not a prerequisite for such entanglements (quite the contrary, as I will soon attempt to show with Kauffman’s theory of life’s origins). But, as I do not imagine rhetoric confined by intention or animal life, the reasons for staying awhile with this HumAnimal rhetorics are given in the exigencies outlined in the previous chapter and the ethical fabric in which rhetoric is woven. In “Regarding the Dead,” Michelle Ballif explains that this address between the self and other—an address that is always already a mourning for the death of the other—is what constitutes rhetoric as “an ethical rather than epistemological enterprise” (466). I believe Parrish is similarly motivated by these exigencies and the ethical nature of rhetoric, although an accounting of mind, intention, and—slipping further down this problematic slope, as Dennett’s discriminations further illustrate—abilities of suffering limits the scope of what kinds of life matter to rhetorical studies. A HumAnimal rhetorics, while admittedly preoccupied with the animal realm, extends

to all life and, further, to all *matter*. These material entanglements also exist within the (agential) reality of competing and cooperating interests or forces—perhaps better theorized as intra-actions—because competition and cooperation often create the circumstances in which selection acts.

Following Barad's intra-action of quantum entanglements that create reality and the "preoriginary rhetoricity" that allows for the self and other of these life-giving and life-sustaining intra-actions, let us return again to Kennedy and the suggestion that rhetoric exists "in biological evolution" rather than behaviors arising from the mind. As explained above, evolution is unique in that it allows us at times to trace the dynamic material intra-actions of bodies and biological phenomena. However, I wish to be clear that I am not claiming rhetoric is encoded in the materiality of our DNA, as Liska charges Kennedy of doing. That would be quite a reductionist view. Rather, as Davis states, "This rhetoricity cannot be innate because it cannot *not* be relational" (548, her emphasis). The similar relationality of an evolutionary rhetoric is inherent to the dynamic movement of DNA and its emergences. A HumAnimal rhetorics also recalls the continual flow of permeable materialities and differential becomings that make any apparent bounded "self" a multitude of potential enfolded relations, hence Haraway's claim: "To be one is to become with many." Symbiotic relationalities are continually occurring within any one "individual." These include everything from relatively benign whale barnacles to beneficial humanimal intestinal bacteria to the truly horrific examples of parasitism, such as the crab parasite *Sacculina*, which turns its host into what Carl Zimmer calls

a “walking corpse”—truly a foil of any easy distinction between life and death for the unfortunate crab (*Parasite* 159). The list of our material mutliplicities is endless.

In this attempt to theorize a HumAnimal rhetorics that is “in” biological evolution—that is entangled, enfolded, invaginated in the becoming and enactment of life itself—I will trace its movements in the select entanglements of sex and symbiosis—relationalities that do much to confuse any distinctions between behaviors and bodies. I will then consider how these movements of life’s mysterious persuasion implicate rhetoric’s influence in the very origins of life by looking into Stuart Kauffman’s theory of complexity, emergence, and spontaneous organization in biological organisms. What follows is not a post-mortem. I do not seek to remove and classify the components of rhetoric once and for all, but rather provide a sketch that furiously chases while it draws.

Sex

Sensation is neither in the world nor in the subject but is the relation of unfolding of the one for the other through a body created at their interface.

Elizabeth Grosz *Chaos, Territory, Art* 72

Perhaps the most appropriate area for seeking to trace these dynamic rhetorical becomings in our entangled materiality is in the movement of DNA. This is where the magic happens, so to speak, as the very earliest form of this process is responsible for life’s origins³. In *Nature’s Nether Regions*, Menno Schilthuizen offers examples of the stunning diversity that exists to exchange genetic information in

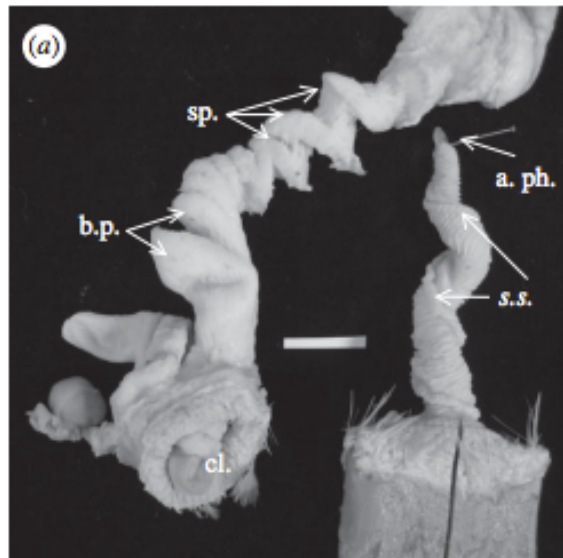
every biological organism, from bacteria, which swap DNA amongst themselves or get stray bits from their environment and then reproduce asexually by budding off little clones of themselves, to corals that “release their eggs and sperm into the waters and hope for the best” (10). Schilthuizen explains how the evolutionary reason for the more familiar (and often more complex) sexual reproduction is still a bit of mystery, as cloning oneself is far more efficient. Even creatures we would more commonly imagine fitting within the vague and general category of “Animal,” like some lizards and sharks, reproduce without (the common notion of) sex. The theory that sexual reproduction originated as a way of “outsmarting parasites” or of “purg[ing] . . . DNA of harmful mutations” illustrates the unpredictability and complexity of this differential entangled becoming (11). This “evolutionary play” of sexual reproduction makes genitalia in particular “the best body parts to illustrate the power of evolution” (5)⁴.

One striking example for witnessing this fascinating material relationality of sexual reproduction (in a form with which we are most familiar) is in the genital evolution of ducks. In 2009 the rather strange and unexpected morphologies of duck genitalia made a big splash in popular culture. Ed Young explains Yale researcher Patricia Brennan’s study of this extraordinary duck sexual reproduction in *National Geographic*:

Many ducks form bonds between males and females that last for a whole mating season. But rival males often violently force themselves onto females. To gain the edge in these conflicts, drakes have evolved large corkscrew

phalluses, lined with ridges and backward-pointing spines, which allow them to deposit their sperm further into a female than their rivals. (Young “Ballistic”)

While these “corkscrew” duck penises are indeed strange, the duck vaginas that have co-evolved with them are even more interesting, and this is the focus of Brennan’s research⁵. As “organic chastity belts,” duck vaginas are described as coiling clockwise (in the opposite direction of the penis) and being something like a maze—with dead ends and twists and turns—in order to make successful fertilization more difficult for the aggressive rival ducks (Young “Ballistic”). Indeed, Schilthuizen explains the results of Brennan et al.’s research on sixteen duck species, “which showed that the complexity of penis and vagina went hand in hand: whenever the penis was large and curly, so was the vagina,” and “the species in which rape was rife were also the ones with the most complex genitalia” (128). The evolution of duck genitalia is truly a story of at least “competing and cooperating interests” such as those Parrish describes as central to his bias for intention, although the ducks’ interests are also manifesting morphologically rather than purely behaviorally.



**Figure 4. Duck Penile and Vaginal Morphologies;
Richard Prum; Web.**

Female behavior also works in concert with the convoluted morphology of her genitalia: if sex with a particular drake is unwanted, she does not do him any favors in navigating her labyrinthine vagina as she does in consensual encounters. If a female wishes to engage in a sexual encounter, she will “strike a pose that signals her receptiveness, keeping her body level and lifting her tail feathers high” while further “repeatedly contract[ing] the walls of her genital tract, relaxing them for long enough for favoured suitors to achieve full penetration” (Young “Ballistic”). In contrast, and perhaps more pointedly, Schilthuizen further explains: “by flexing the muscles in her vagina wall, the female would be able to block a rapist male from properly inflating his countercoiled penis into her vagina” (128). The co-evolution in this, what Carl Zimmer calls, “war of the sexes” in ducks is an extraordinary example of the difficulty in drawing a line between intentional behavior and physiology (“In

Ducks”). The female duck’s behavior in thwarting or helping her suitors cannot be severed from the contours and contractions of her vagina. The gradual co-evolution of both male and female ducks’ bodyminds is a delicate and complex movement of entangled persuasion.

If we continue to look into the bizarre sexual entanglements manifested in animal bodyminds as condensations of evolutionary enactments, there is much to see. Sperm is particularly fascinating, as it has been found to contain a surprising number of proteins in large quantities. In a creature as small as the banana fly, an amazing 133 seminal proteins have been found that apparently have a dramatic effect on females in “a kind of neuropsychological manipulation” by “hijack[ing] a female’s hormonal system by shutting down her sex drive” (Schilthuizen 146). These recently inseminated female banana flies also “begin exuding a scent that render them unattractive” (146). The “antiaphrodisiac” effects of banana fly semen occur after one of its proteins passes through the vaginal wall and into her bloodstream where it catches a ride to her brain, thus causing her both to be uninterested in other males and, presumably, uninteresting to other males as well (146). When proteins are not small enough to pass through the vaginal wall of a species so easily, they may achieve passage via traumatic penetration *through* the wall by a male’s penis or actual corrosion of the wall by proteins, as occurs in a species of bedbug and the common house fly, respectively (131, 147). Humanimals are not exempt from this startling behavior, as sperm cells have been found floating around outside of expected areas as well, even exiting one fallopian tube into the

abdominal cavity and entering another tube through a “back entrance” (134). How these wandering sperm cells may affect women in ways other than fertilization is not fully understood, though past studies suggest that women who have unprotected sex have fewer symptoms of depression and, while pregnant, also are less likely to develop preeclampsia (147-148). Humanimal male sperm cells have also been found to contain surprising hormone compounds that both stimulate ovulation processes and also maintain pregnancy. Scientists theorize these seminal compounds may be a “counter-strategy to concealed ovulation in women,” a matter to which I will return shortly (Motluk).

Perhaps even more fascinating than sperm and its mysterious components is how female bodyminds *react to* the sperm or to sex itself, from full out rejection of sperm to sperm uptake and (short or long-term) storage to the developmental processes of young and all the strange divergences in between. A seemingly strange and rather gruesome example of female mating behavior is demonstrated in *Tidarren* spiders who snack on their mates following sex (or, perhaps more appropriately, *during sex*, as the male’s pedipalp continues to “actively pump sperm into her for several hours” following his death) (Schilthuisen 139). Preying mantis females are similar perpetrators; during sex, the female bites off the head of the male and eventually eats his whole body (National Geographic). In mammals, including humans, females have been found to retain sperm much more successfully following an orgasm (than if no orgasm is achieved), which seems to create a low pressure vacuum in the uterus (Schilthuisen 79). Some female species, including

humans, have been found to expel some or all of a sperm “deposit” in a behavior known as “flowback,” or “sperm dumping,” while others may hang onto sperm for from several months, as is the case with some bats who keep hibernating sperm in their vaginas until a warm spring arrives, to several years, as occurs in species as different as snakes and ants (60; 82-83). Females like various insects with “sperm pouches” and turtles with “countless miniscule sperm-harboring tubes all along their oviduct” can even store sperm from *multiple* males for future use (83). These are examples of what William G. Eberhard, behavioral ecologist and senior staff scientist at the Smithsonian, has coined as “cryptic female choice.” The forms cryptic female choice can take—like the “Bruce Effect” of induced abortion in pregnant mice when a new male is smelled or touched, or in pregnant geladas when a new male becomes alpha—are staggering in diversity and can be enacted at any stage of mating (87).

The chemical communication that enfolds bodies and behaviors in this process of evolutionary becoming is complex and mysterious. Even in humanimals, the processes are not completely understood. An intriguing example of the degree to which chemical communication can influence something like attraction is demonstrated in a scientific article in the journal *Evolution and Human Behavior* titled “Ovulatory Cycle Effects on Tip Earnings By Lap Dancers: Economic Evidence of Estrus?” The title pretty much says it all. As the authors explain, it has been theorized that estrus was lost at some point in humanimal evolution. Estrus, or “increased female sexual receptivity, proceptivity, selectivity, and attractiveness”

immediately preceding ovulation during which time a female is most likely to conceive (often colloquially referred to as “heat” or “rut”), has been found in most mammals, including in our closest of evolutionary relatives, primates (375). Little evidence indicates its presence in female humanimals, perhaps, as scientists have speculated, to “hide” ovulation. Hidden ovulation, it is thought, may be evolutionarily advantageous if it encourages mates to stick around longer (in chemical ignorance), thus providing all of the wonderful male attributes for longer periods of time, such as “male provisioning and paternal care in long-term pair-bonded relationships” (375). Hidden ovulation would also help to explain the likewise hidden “counter-strategy” of humanimal sperm pumping ovulation-inducing hormones into women (as stated above, those compounds that stimulate ovulation and help maintain pregnancy are considered evidence of such a counter-strategy). However, Geoffrey Miller et al. have uncovered support for subtle indications of estrus in normally ovulating women (well, at least subtler than “bright red swollen behinds” in female chimps [Motluk]) in comparison to women using hormonal contraceptives. In this provocative study, researchers measured the direct effect of perceived female attractiveness on the performers’ nightly earnings and plotted this across menstrual cycle schedules. Lap dancers are particularly appropriate for a study of this kind, as the researchers explain, because of the intimate multi-sensory contact between the women and men:

In each lap dance . . . the topless female dancer sits on the man’s lap, either facing away from him (to display her buttocks, back, and hair) or facing him

(either leaning back to display her breasts, and to make conversation and eye contact, or leaning forward to whisper in his ear). Lap dances typically entail intense rhythmic contact between the female pelvis and the clothed male penis. (376-377)

For those otherwise unfamiliar with lap dances, the description of this sexually-charged activity sounds much like a mating ritual one would expect to find in other animals. Clearly any kind of unregistered chemical persuasion, if it exists, could be picked up by males in such an intensely intimate scenario, which lasts anywhere from three minutes to over an hour. Lap dancers are also quite appropriate for this study, as their pay provides direct measure of perceived attraction. Results of the study clearly indicate that some type of estrus-induced persuasion probably exists. Not only did women in the estrus phase of their cycle earn significantly more tips per shift (“about US\$90 more than during the luteal phase and about US\$170 more than during the menstrual phase”), normally cycling women made more overall than non-cycling women who were taking some form of chemical contraception (379). Therefore, estrus in humanimals may exist with subtle persuasive cues about when fertilization is most likely to occur. This does not mean that estrus is not hidden—as the authors point out, the chemical suasion was not clear enough to more severely delimit dancer tips who were not in estrus (379). Rather, estrus (as revealed through subtle ways that leave men relatively unaware of their increased attraction) can still be considered hidden, because its slight presence likely maintains the long-term advantages that are theorized.

The wide variety of genitalia, performances, and chemical communications of mating are attributed to the high stakes of this reproductive process, but there also seems to be something more happening here. In other words, perhaps sexual selection should not be reduced to function only. Why do species of beetle that otherwise look very much the same have such radical differences in penile morphology to the extent that it is often the easiest route to identification? The same is true for bumblebees and various other insects. This pattern of incredible biodiversity is “pervasive throughout the animal kingdom” (Schilthuizen 32). The otherwise conservative nature of evolution makes this multiplicity of difference very interesting indeed, and it often comes at quite a high evolutionary cost.

In *Chaos, Territory, Art: Deleuze and the Framing of the Earth*, Grosz argues that this unique process of sexual selection has much more going on than the otherwise functional aspects of natural selection. She focuses on the excesses that often manifest for the sole sake of sexuality despite the inherent costs “of becoming more visible or audible, more noticeable to predators as well as suitors” (68). In contrast to Freud, who suggests that art is the result of displaced sexual impulses “through representation,” Grosz argues that:

sexuality itself needs to function artistically to be adequately sexual, adequately creative, that sexuality (as neither drive nor instinct but rather the alignment of bodies and practices with other bodies or with parts of one’s own body) needs to harness excessiveness and invention to function at all. (64-65)

The reasons for female choice (e.g., why are brighter reds in males more attractive in cardinals?) still remains “a bit of a mystery,” according to Schilthuizen, who explains that prior debate about whether females just willy-nilly prefer certain characteristics or are actually attracted to good genes (a brighter red means better genes) is less of a controversy now, because “the genes that females go for are always good” (50). Grosz’s argument that “art is of the animal” and works “for the sake of sensation itself” (*Chaos* 62) aligns with the sensory drive theory of sexual selection in explaining an alternative reason for female choice. The sensory drive theory argues that anything that stimulates the senses, ranges of which “have been optimized for [a given] species’ habitat and way of life,” will induce a positive female response (Schilthuizen 52). In other words, “stimulation *equals* liking” (53).

Schilthuizen describes several studies in which artificial additions to a male’s appearance had noticeable effects on whether females deemed males attractive simply because the additions presumably stimulated the female’s senses⁶. This may explain the highly elaborate aesthetics that males embody and create in the attempt to persuade females, varieties of which are particularly stunning in birds. Peacocks are a well-known example of how the elaborate display of males comes at the potential expense of their survival, should it be threatened.

Many birds, including peacocks, engage in elegant and complicated courtship dances, gestures, and songs. Male bowerbirds are a unique example of how males may cater to female sensory experience, as they create what might be argued as an architectural-artistic space in which to engage in their mating performance.

Bowerbirds gather colored objects to decorate two courts on either side of an avenue created by two parallel walls “made of densely thatched sticks,” even collecting discarded human plastics and waste if the colors are attractive. In *PNAS* (*Proceeding of the National Academy of the Sciences*), behavior ecologists Laura A. Kelley and John A. Endler report that in addition to the remarkable behavior of decorating pale “gesso” courts created by “stones, bones, bleached shells, and other gray-to-white objects” with bright objects to attract a female’s eye, great bowerbirds also use a “complex geometry”:

The uncolored court objects are arranged in a gradient so that object size increases as distance from the avenue entrance increases. This size-distance gradient creates a forced perspective illusion of an even textured pattern for a female viewing the court from within the bower. . . The forced perspective may also facilitate other illusions, including those that alter the apparent size



Figure 5. Photograph of the decorated court of a Satin Bowerbird’s bower. Blue plastic pieces are amongst the objects collected. Web.

of the displayed ornaments and illusions that may hold the female's attention, making mating more likely. (Kelley and Endler 20980-20981)

This perspective of illusion—an animal *geometry* of persuasion—illustrates the complexity and, perhaps, excess that accompany such a crucial process as sexual selection. In *What is Philosophy*, Deleuze and Guattari describe the bowerbird as “a complete artist”: “This is not a synaesthesia of the flesh but blocs of sensations in the territory—colors, postures, and sounds that sketch out a total work of art. . . . In this respect art is continually haunted by the animal” (184). Art, and, I would argue, rhetoric—a Humanimal rhetorics of biological becoming—is haunted by the animal⁷.

In the evolutionary becomings of sexual reproduction, bodies and behavior are mutually enfolded in a rhetorical dance, just as they are in other movements of biological evolution. Rather than simply relying on observable behaviors of creatures that typically come to mind(/body) with the all-encompassing label “Animal” in order to make a decisive cut between beings and abilities, it is important to examine the strange, cryptic corridors of embodied becomings in places humanimals may not typically look⁸. But even the observable displays of sexual performativity illustrate the complexities that make mind and body, human and animal, intentional rhetoric and unintentional behavior endlessly impossible to separate for the purposes of definition.

Symbiosis

We are not organisms but superorganisms, and understanding our behavior ultimately requires an understanding of the network of selfish entities that inhabit our bodies and actively interact with it.

Peter Kramer and Paola Bressan “Humans as Superorganisms” 475

I am large, I contain multitudes.

Walt Whitman *Song of Myself*

Delicate lacey patterns of greens, whites, and yellows decorate the bark of trees in our front yard where foliose, fruticose, and crustose varieties of lichens thrive in the sunlight. Here a type of mutualism has been established between algae and fungi in which algae gain protection and structure from the fungi, and fungi gain nutrients from the algae’s photosynthesis. Each organism benefits from this intimate ontological entanglement, each alternating in layers of skin and flesh. Fungi not only give life to the extraordinary processes of fermentation—something that changed human diet and even human culture as agriculture became the focus of humanimal efforts—but they also form extensive underground networks of complex symbiosis that sustain and “unite forests of different plant species,” creating a kind of forest “nervous system.” This fungal nervous system can deliver pesticides to plants for protection from insects as well as nutrients to those that are lacking (Zimmer “Hypersea”). In addition to sexual selection, symbiosis vividly illuminates the

entanglements of biological materiality. In fact, given the endosymbiotic theory of the origin of cells, symbiosis is inherent to life itself.

An example even closer to home than the front yard exists in the various bacteria that have taken up permanent residence in human intestinal tracts—100 *trillion* microorganisms to be more precise. These barely acknowledged internal residents outnumber our own cells in staggering numbers and contain “100 times as many genes as our own genome” (Kramer and Bressan 467). It is not difficult to imagine that such a large composition of intestinal others could potentially have a significant effect on the larger “I.” These symbiotic relationships, without which we could not live, compose a kind of “superorganism” that makes referring to “I” as one bounded, known self quite a bit more complicated (hence the appropriate reference to Whitman’s *Song of Myself* at the beginning of this section: “I contain multitudes”). Certain microbes, known as “functional metagenomics,” may have more of an influence over our health than others, actually influencing the “metabolic phenotypes” our bodies manifest (Li et al.). These microbes that influence digestion and metabolism vary greatly across cultures, as they are significantly affected by diet, environment, genetics, and stress (Li et al., Turnbaugh et al.). The significance of these microbes for health has even led to the growing popularity of fecal transplants for infections of *Clostridium difficile* in intestinal lining. *C. diff.* infections typically become an issue after antibiotics disrupt the normal ecology of gut microbes. Further aggravating the problem is the use of more antibiotics to treat the infection, which only works in approximately 20-30% of cases—a poor prognosis

for sufferers of this infection who develop serious diarrhea, nausea, and weight-loss and—in extreme cases—may even need to have their colon removed (McKenna). Fecal transplants, on the other hand, introduce a healthy ecology of gut microbes from a healthy donor, thus overthrowing the dominance of *C. diff.* in an infected person. This remarkable procedure has upwards of 90% success rate, demonstrating the massive role of this meta-self we never see (McKenna).

Further illustrating the role of culture and diet on the life of our internal microbiomes is the story of a failed transition of two “wolfgirls” to human society in India in the 1920s. In Bhanu Kapil’s *Humanimal: A Project for Future Children*, Kapil reveals in an enchanting mix of poetry, autobiography, fiction, and on-site reporting narrating the historical case of Kamala and Amala, two children literally raised by wolves until their discovery by a local priest. After shooting and killing Amala and Kamala’s (wolf) mother, the priest attempts in various cruel and ignorant ways to make the girls “human” again. But their young bodies are acclimated to the diet of wolves, and their internal meta-selves cannot cope: “Both children, the wolfgirls, were given a fine yellow powder to clean their kidneys but their bodies, having adapted to animal ways of excreting meat, could not cope with this technology. Red worms came out of their bodies and the younger girl died” (55). The attempt to “save” both children fails disastrously, and both die in their new, “clean” human forms. This tragic narrative illustrates how the preoccupation with clear divides between human and animal blinds us to the more complex ways in which we *are*

ourselves a complex interplay of ontologies—humanimal condensations of the evolutionary processes of becoming. We are a multiplicity of living forms.

Intestinal microbes are not the only internal others that constitute our humanimal ontologies. In “Humans as Superorganisms: How Microbes, Viruses, Imprinted Genes, and Other Selfish Entities Shape Our Behavior,” Peter Kramer and Paola Bressan illustrate the diversity of life within each human “I.” In addition to our intestinal microbial ecologies, each of us is likely to consist of brain microbes, exogenous and endogenous viruses, “foreign” human cells, and imprinted genes. According to the authors, brain microbes, like the particularly nasty *Toxoplasma gondii* that “is capable of actively manipulating” its host, are parasitic infections that influence humanimal behavior. *Toxoplasma* in particular has been associated with “depression, suicides, changes in personality, and various mental and neurological diseases, including bipolar and obsessive-compulsive disorders” (467). Viruses can have influential effects on behavior as well, and—given the way endogenous strains have integrated their DNA into humanimal DNA, some of which are present in germline cells and are passed on indefinitely throughout generations—it is unclear to what extent viruses shape the expression of our genes: “The DNA of human endogenous retroviruses occupies at least 8% of our genome; genetic material of so-called jumping genes, which resemble retroviruses and may also have a viral origin, comprises another 37%” (370). Given all this life within the illusory boundary of our skin (itself crawling with various forms of microscopic life forms), the authors argue:

Whereas our cohabitation with one or another of them may not pose a strong challenge to the commonly shared assumption that humans are unitary individuals, the presence of a large number and wide variety of such entities—and the power they have on us—renders this assumption untenable. . . . It is time to change the very concept we have of ourselves and to realize that one human individual is neither just human nor just one individual. (475)

The behavioral influence that many of these internal residents of our humanimal superorganisms exert indicates the problems with drawing any discrete line between mind and body and, furthermore, in determining exclusive abilities based on behavior. If only certain animals are capable of intentional rhetorical behavior, then this must additionally be attributed to their internal constituents.

Parasites like the brain microbes Kramer and Bressan describe have the worst reputation amongst symbiotes, as they manifest the only type of symbiotic relationship in which one species benefits from the clear detriment of an other. The thought of something like a worm taking up residence inside the protective boundary of our skin and burrowing into deep internal recesses we cannot see ourselves is truly horrifying, but this complex dependability on other organisms to survive and flourish illustrates the entangled movement of life. Perhaps the most notorious of parasites in humanimals (and to which ancient religious texts may also refer) is the guinea worm. The guinea worm is even thought to have inspired the caduceus symbol for medicine of “two serpents wound around a staff,” as the only

way to get a guinea worm out of the leg (where the mother begins to emerge with a bursting uterus of little worms seeking water) is to “rest for a week, slowly winding the worm turn by turn onto a stick to keep it alive until it . . . crawl[s] free” (Zimmer *Parasite* 2). Parasites have an uncanny ability to survive in hostile bodily interiors where they can “turn just about every organ in the body . . . into their home,” even “rebuild[ing] parts of the host’s body to suit their own comfort” (24). Parasites can also “feed on almost anything: blood, gut lining, liver, snot,” and, if that does not suit, they can influence their hosts to find them food (24).

One example of the sophistication inherent to many parasites is *Sacculina*, a barnacle that sheds most of its barnacle body to invade crabs and essentially turn them into zombies doing nothing but the parasite’s bidding. Once a female *Sacculina* has successfully deployed her finger-like projections throughout a crab body to drink nutrients from its blood, she can remain in this parasitic relationship with the crab forever: “[a crab] can go on with its life with the parasite filling its entire body, the roots even wrapping around its eyestalks” (80). However, if a crab becomes inhabited both by the dominant, controlling female form of the parasite and the smaller male *Sacculina* (a *Sacculina* infection begins with the female form of the parasite, who provides the ability for a male to further infect the crab), the male begins fertilizing the female *Sacculina*’s eggs and sets off a reaction in which the crab eventually loses the ability to harness any energy for itself. It can no longer regenerate a limb if it is lost, “it stops molting and growing . . . and while other crabs mate and produce a new generation, parasitized crabs simply go on eating and

eating” (81). The female *Sacculina* so controls her crab host that the crab treats the growing pouch of *Sacculina* larvae as if they were its own. In fact, infected male crabs behave as if they were pregnant females: “She strokes [the growing pouch] clean as the larvae grow, and when they are ready to emerge, she forces them out in pulses, shooting out heavy clouds of parasites. As they come spraying from her body she waves her claws to help them on their way” (82).

The horror of parasites turning their hosts into zombie-like reservoirs for survival may prompt us to want to eradicate parasites, but according to many parasitologists, this would be a mistake that could create significant detrimental effects on the ecosystems where parasites play a critical role. In “Save the Parasites (Seriously),” Ed Young explains the need for parasite conservation, as parasites often “direct the flow of energy” and “keep populations of pests under control.” Insects driven to suicide by “mind-controlling worms” have even been found to supply trout with over half their diet. When you remove one critical element in a complex ecological entanglement, it is hard to anticipate the extent to which an entire ecosystem will be affected. Ecosystems are complex systems of entangled life, of which no linear, hierarchal origination exists⁹.

Origins

Before it is drinking water, amniotic fluid is the creeks and rivers that fill reservoirs. It is the underground water that fills wells. And before it is creeks and rivers and groundwater, amniotic fluid is rain. . . . When I look at amniotic fluid, I am looking at

rain falling on orange groves. I am looking at melon fields, potatoes in wet earth, frost on pasture grasses. The blood of cows and chickens . . . The nectar gathered by bees and hummingbirds . . . Whatever is inside hummingbird eggs is also inside my womb. Whatever is in the world's water is here in my hands.

Sandra Steingraber *Having Faith: An Ecologist's Journey to Motherhood* 66-67

Sex and symbiosis both implicate the various entangled origins of our material ontologies and hopefully illustrate how difficult it might be to pin down life's origins. Where and how did/does life begin? Life has many "origins" (and many theories of origins) depending upon where one chooses to look. Since my argument for a HumAnimal rhetorics is one for rhetoric "in" evolution—in this process and enactment of life of which organisms and characteristics are condensations of ontological persuasion—a look at the question of origins is necessary (even if no single, definitive answer can be given—and perhaps this itself is telling).

The above quote from ecologist Sandra Steingraber traces water throughout its journey enfolded in the earth's banks, in plants and animals, and finally in the amniotic fluid that embraces her daughter's unfolding development in the womb. The ontological status of mother and fetus¹⁰ is one of intimate entanglement. A developing fetus not only consists of the biological material of its parents, it is suffused with maternal chemical communication, nourishment, and protection. The contours of a fetus unfold and invaginate as nascent life emerges: budding limbs and tail, dark eye spots, folds of skin, the circulation of blood separate from maternal blood. In humanimal pregnancy and birth, a woman's placenta is the material

threshold of becoming that separates as well as joins. The placenta transfers critical compounds from the mother's blood that feed and promote this flourishing of life within. The placenta is an ontological embrace.

A developing fetus is in a dynamic relation with the mother as well, rather than simply passive precious cargo. An embryo helps initiate its own implantation in the mother's uterine wall, blocks chemicals that signal the shedding of the nutrient-rich uterine lining that is prepared throughout each menstrual cycle, creates chemical compounds that signal for continued production of the uterine lining, suppresses maternal immune reaction, and even "contributes signals that promote the onset of labor" (Dileo). Following birth, this emerged life continues biochemical dances within its tissues, as in the downregulation of his or her own immune system to welcome in a vast array of the world's microbiota, beginning a lifelong symbiotic relationality in what Kramer and Bressan call "an ancient, stable, fundamental component of the human superorganism"¹¹ (468).

The elegant maneuvering of these chemical processes has emerged prior to "human"—just as with sex and symbiosis, the ability to create another life from one's own materiality in a dynamic biological relation connects us to, entangles us with, *makes us* animal: humanimal. We can examine life's complex family history in the Mobius strips of DNA and RNA, chart divergences and convergences, map and name life; but nothing makes the reality sink in quite like the successful transplantation of that biological materiality across the human-animal abyss. Many examples of such transplantation come to mind¹². One transphenomenon in relation

to our material, maternal origins is an early method of identifying humanimal pregnancy. As Steingraber explains, the “Aschheim-Zondek method” developed in Berlin in the early 1900s entailed “injecting a virgin mouse (later a rabbit or a toad) with the urine of a possibly pregnant woman and then dissecting the animal to see whether it had ovulated” (6). Ovulation in this now dead, dissected animal was positive indication of humanimal pregnancy. Such a becoming, signaled by animal death, vividly illustrates the persistent pattern of a directed entanglement of human (birth) and animal (death) that always benefits the human.

Steingraber’s tracing of the movement of water that eventually becomes amniotic fluid also illustrates a theory that we are not only animal, we are ocean. It is not a new idea that life originated in the ocean; certainly most of us are familiar with the theory of a “primordial soup,” thick with life-giving compounds, from which life arose. What may sound new is what paleontologists Mark and Dianna McMenamin call a theory of hypersea. The hypersea is essentially a current of water that flows on land, through all terrestrial tissues, providing them with life-giving and life-sustaining abilities. The way this theory of hypersea explains the origins of terrestrial life and diversification is in how it illustrates the benefits of gaining more ability to photosynthesize on land while maintaining a link to the “up-welling” of nutrients in the ocean. The McMenamins believe that this mediation between ocean and land occurred with the establishment of a “protofungus” and “protoplant” symbiotic relationship when both were scrounging for nutrients along the ocean’s shore. Like all remarkable beginnings, this crucial symbiotic relationship occurred

in a failed-death event when one (the fungus, as fungi characteristically emit enzymes that aid in consumption) attempted to eat the other (the plant) (Zimmer “Hypersea”). The protoplant and protofungus are now able to “seize control of the flow,” creating a positive feedback loop in which more and more growth is possible.

Hypersea is not the first time symbiosis is theorized as creating the means for life (whether its origin or flourishing of diversification). Endosymbiosis, the theory of our eukaryotic origins, is essentially this failed act of eating an other. In *The Whole Creature: Complexity Science, Biosemiotics, and the Evolution of Culture*, Wendy Wheeler describes this process as an ingestion of difference—the difference that remains within. If we take the origins of life as the cell, one necessary condition for this origin is a border—a membrane—marking an interior off from the environment. What life needs is a body. A body created by membrane provides a gradient for inclusion and exclusion, for protection and the taking in of nutrients, and it also allows for an increase in complexity. This other-within, this feeling-with¹³, is perhaps the first creative act. It is an embodied negotiation—an entanglement and attunement that initiates a becoming of life.

A very recent alternative theory to the origins of life proposes that the necessary body for life’s emergence began, strangely enough, within rocks, and an increasingly complex life emerged within their microscopic interior compartments. Geologist Mike Russel stumbled across this unusual rock of “hollow tubes,” which he believes was created in the disturbance of hydrothermal vents on the ocean floor. Such a rock would have existed at a time when the then-acidic oceanic water met

with alkaline water shooting from the vents, thus creating a proton cascade and the “chemical garden” Russell imagines, with “an abundant flux of matter and energy in the same place—a setting conducive for self-replicating reactions, and also a free lunch for fledgling creatures” (Requarth). This type of rock would have provided a gradient across which energy could eventually be harvested, forming the primordial chemical reactions that cells use today. Energy, as the compound adenosine triphosphate (ATP), is what drives living processes. Without this most fundamental of components and its constituents, genetic material like DNA would be dead-in-the-water, so to speak. The concentration and movement of energy across thresholds is what brought the precursors of life together, bundling and folding materiality that attracted and repelled, gradually forming more and more complex systems. These chemical gardens of narrow rocks have been found, and they support Russel’s theory:

a cluster of otherworldly pinnacles rising from the ocean floor, as tall as 20-storey buildings . . . This strange landscape turned out to host an exotic ecosystem of snails, crabs, worms and shellfish, sustained by microbes that convert raw elements from the inner Earth into life without any help from the Sun. (Requarth)

Life: born in the darkest depths between shores.

What remains curious about any theory of life’s origins (or, perhaps more appropriately, emergences) is the entropy-order paradox of life. Life’s very coming into existence works against the second law of thermodynamics that explains how

the universe moves toward entropy, or disorder. The complexity of life somehow emerged in the midst of such a universe. In *What is Life?*, Erwin Schrödinger explains how life increases order “locally”—in the living system—by increasing entropy “globally” in the universe, thus maintaining the second law. Russell’s chemical gardens illuminate a scenario in which an energy gradient could be utilized to do just that. In *At Home in the Universe: The Search for the Laws of Self-Organization and Complexity*, Stuart Kauffman unites this question about the entropy-order paradox with biology by turning to complexity science. In contrast to the predominant focus in evolutionary biology on selection and the accidental-life that apparently arises in the most unlikely of circumstances, Kauffman suggests that the laws of complexity and self-organization make the emergence of life, as “expressions of deeper natural laws,” a given (8). Kauffman’s argument for self-organization, called “order for free,” suggests that “whenever a collection of chemicals contains enough different kinds of molecules,” rather than those molecules being arranged in the correct order one-by-one to create a complex living organism, “a metabolism will crystallize from the broth” (45). In other words, given the right conditions, “metabolic networks . . . can spring full-grown from a primordial soup” (45). This is difficult to imagine, but there is support for such extraordinary emergence (or, according to Kauffman, completely ordinary and expected emergence), and the requisite accumulation of “a sufficiently diverse mix of molecules” is available in Russell’s chemical gardens (50).

According to Mark C. Taylor in *The Moment of Complexity: Emerging Network Culture*, the “complex adaptive systems” of life “always emerge at the edge of chaos far from equilibrium” and “are not static but are in a state of continual evolution” (16). To remain pliable enough to be open to change and yet stable enough to maintain order, life must be poised “on the edge of chaos” (Kauffman 86). Poised in such a way (one can imagine, about to tumble), the right saturation of order vs. disorder exists for the creation of what Kauffman calls a “combinatorial explosion” (185). Taylor describes this explosion as the “critical transition . . . where quantitative change suddenly leads to qualitative change (Taylor 148). The phenomenon of life’s ever-emerging complexity is characterized by several crucial points for further understanding the rhetorical, evolutionary entanglement of life: the “nonlinear events” that result in the further emergent complexity “have effects disproportionate to their causes”; these entanglements, or “dynamic interactions among individual elements of the system generate global events that require a holistic description, which cannot be reduced to an account of their individual elements”; and each emergent event, though predictable, has unpredictable effects (148-149).

The position of life poised on the edge of chaos, within range of another cascade of increasing complexity, suggests a threshold across which the (self)organization of life and the entropy of the universe embrace—a placental embrace across which new complexity arises. Just as the skin that acts in dynamic relation between inside and outside, this threshold—in the moment of becoming—

is mediated by sensation. In *Chaos, Territory, Art*, Grosz explains how Deleuze and Guattari articulate this movement of becoming in terms of a musical refrain, which has “three basic components . . . a home, a yard, and a way out” (52). This “way out” is Deleuze and Guattari’s “line of flight to the outside, a movement of migration, transformation . . .” from order to chaos (52). Grosz describes this movement as an “extraction” from chaos, a way of framing chaos and either containing or unleashing its vibratory force with art:

Sensation contracts the vibratory waves of matter, of the earth and ultimately of chaotic cosmic forces, into sensory forms that are capable of functioning as a stimulus to the nervous system. Art transmits vibratory force through its successful transformations from energy to sensation to stimulation. Art contracts, which is to say it synthesizes and compresses the materiality that composes it, transmitting the force of materiality, its vibratory resonance, from a work to a body. (62)

The way I understand this self-organization, which Kauffman argues as the most fundamental movement that creates life and perpetuates evolutionary change (or movement within life), is not in extraction from chaos, but in a sudden tunneling of bodies into alignment—a critical, cascading moment of entanglement. And yes, sensation—the feeling-with of life—is that movement, that relationality, that is an “unfolding of the one for the other through a body created at their interface” (72). Sensation connects bodies to this preoriginary becoming. While Grosz’s focus is on the role of art in our body’s relation to the universe and to chaos, I argue it is in this

critical cascading moment of becoming-entanglement that rhetoric suffuses these ontological alignments and negotiations of bodies in dynamic relationality. This relationality *is* being and its becoming as we have seen in this chapter, and its continual surmounting of critical thresholds drives evolutionary change.

The many theories of life's origins often mistake such a retracing as a gradual, linear progression of chance; but life emerges suddenly, in fits of rhetorical alignment. Russell hesitates to define the life he imagines emerging from hollow compartments of rock deep in the ocean's abyss, but what he articulates is this: "life isn't a thing so much as a manner of being, a restless fit of destruction and creation. If it can be defined at all, it is this: life is a self-sustaining, highly organized flux, a natural way that matter and energy express themselves under certain conditions" (qtd. in Requarth). Life is this process, this movement of relationality in which we are composed in births and origins, recomposed in the dynamic process of our changing and entangling materialities, and decomposed in death. Perhaps we will never know the true origin of life, but—based on what we know of these processes now—we might say that, rather than life ending, it is punctuated by births and deaths in cascades of difference.

CHAPTER THREE

THE ABYSS



Figure 6. Eadweard Muybridge's "Animal Locomotion Plate 503." Eadweard Muybridge Online Archive; Web.

The animal looks at us, and we are naked before it. Thinking perhaps begins there.

Jacques Derrida *The Animal That Therefore I Am* 29

In the accompanying ideology, animals are always the observed. The fact that they can observe us has lost all significance.

John Berger *About Looking* 16

Given our current information economy and the increasing proliferation of visual media, images in visual culture are especially important to consider regarding our material multispecies entanglements. What, for example, are we to make of the

widespread fascination with cat memes? Why do images of animals balancing different objects on their bodies go viral? Looking at animals may have begun in earnest with the zoos of colonialism, but it seems to have reached new (often strange) heights with increasing technological sophistication. The visibility of these digital animals (and the simultaneous invisibility of others) recalls John Berger's contemplations from nearly four decades ago: what does it mean to look at animals today? And, perhaps more importantly, what does it mean that we no longer offer animals the opportunity to look back?

In *Ecosee: Image, Rhetoric, Nature*, editors Sid Dobrin and Sean Morey consider anew the "dilemma of representation" in creating and looking at animal and environmental images (3). As Dobrin and Morey point out, previous rhetoricians engaging with environmental discourses have overlooked the importance of images in shaping meaning, but images now constitute so much of that discourse that they are in need of critical attention. In "A Rhetorical Look at Ecosee," Morey explains how "our culture is moving increasingly toward a rhetoric of images, where most communicative acts occur through visual media" (41). Indeed, digital media now allow for "viral" communication—a metaphor that implies a pandemic infection of our biological beings. The types of images "going viral" are symptomatic of the systemic perceptions in our local and global societies. Irmgard Emmelhainz refers to this virility as a "circulation of visibilities" that are actually making it *more difficult to see* the pervasive ecological detriment that characterizes our Anthropocene era (Emmelhainz). Understanding these viral

infections as constructed within a representational framework may help aid the development of an alternative pharmakon—one that illuminates its own material processes at work within us and makes us aware of our breached, porous bodily frontiers.

The issue with representation and its use of reflection as a metaphor for constructing knowledge is the presumed distance it creates between an image and an observer. As Barad explains in *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, there is *no such distance*. And there are no discrete, individual bodies with characteristics that exist prior to entanglement with other bodies. By looking at animals, whether in film, sculpture, Internet memes, photography, drawings, etc., we are constructing specific entangled realities with those animals. As Barad explains, these are material-discursive practices that create agential cuts in the world, carving out the phenomena in which we, the observers, are an entangled part:

... a different material-discursive apparatus of bodily production materializes a different configuration of the world, not merely a different description of a fixed and independent reality. We are responsible for the world of which we are a part, not because it is an arbitrary construction of our choosing but because *reality is sedimented out of particular practices* that we have a role in shaping and through which we are shaped. (390, my emphasis)

Description of the world is not just the concern here; it is the actual *configuration* of the world created by our practices that we seek to address. Despite increasing

scientific evidence to trouble the human/animal distinction, the ontoepistemological abyss between these two categories continues to simultaneously be symptomatic of and justification for everyday animal exploitations. And this abyss is evident in visual culture. These images, with their grasping, objectifying ways of looking, create very real consequences for humanimal-animal entanglements. If awareness of our rhetorically entangled beings is to occur, these visual engagements with animals are crucial to examine.

The examples of animal images within this chapter do not include those which are overtly cruel or exploitive in their depiction of animal suffering and death. Leaked footage of mistreatment in corporate farming practices and visual documentation of animal abuse make most people *look away*. These are the images that we cannot bear to witness. They are *too* real, too cruel. Berger describes such arresting images as “printed on the black curtain which is drawn across what we choose to forget or refuse to know” (42). They are “an eye we cannot shut”; they “accuse nobody and everybody” (42, 44). The innocent subtlety of a “cute” or “funny” image, on the other hand, allows this black curtain to stay drawn without revealing the indecency of our everyday lives. Yet these innocent photos create the very fabric of the curtain. They are where these perceptions of “us” and “them” take root, growing into the open secrets of larger exploitations. Therefore, to avoid the urge to look away from those overt exploitations and cruelties and end up ignoring the issue of the black curtain of animal representation all together, this chapter

investigates the subtler abyssal cuts created by the seemingly innocuous images we see everyday.

Abyssal Looking

The animal scrutinises him across a narrow abyss of non-comprehension. . .

The man too is looking across a similar, but not identical, abyss of non-comprehension. And this is so wherever he looks. He is always looking across ignorance and fear. And so, when he is *being seen* by the animal, he is being seen as his surroundings are seen by him. His recognition of this is what makes the look of the animal familiar. And yet the animal is distinct, and can never be confused with man.

—John Berger *About Looking* 5

Boundaries do not sit still.

—Karen Barad *Meeting the Universe Halfway* 171

In studying Barad's agential realist account of quantum mechanics, one of the things that becomes remarkably and beautifully apparent about "the nature of nature" is that there is no ontological abyss between discrete things or beings (29). (Indeed, there are no "things," as the smallest unit enacted in any agential cut is the entangled phenomenon itself [56]). Whatever perception of an ontological abyss may exist within a representation framework, it is just that: a flawed perception using an inadequate optical metaphor for understanding phenomena. In fact, there

can be no discrete, determinate characteristics that separate subject and object in advance. Furthermore, any *perceived* abyss is never settled but rather moves with every agential cut created. This is strikingly similar to Derrida's discussion of the apparent abyss between "Human" and "Animal" in *The Animal that Therefore I Am*, which I refer to in Chapter 1. While Derrida's stance is that the question of whether an "abyss" exists between the so-called Human and Animal is not debatable, he troubles this discussion significantly by arguing that humans and animals exist instead as "relations... *at once* intertwined and abyssal, and they can never be totally objectified" (31, my emphasis). Any line plunging into an unseen, untraceable abyss between categories is, in fact, no line at all. Rather it is an unknowable, enfolding ontological relation. And, according to Barad, it is a relation that changes with every measurement or apparatus that makes a cut, which includes every photograph, every video, and every performance of the animal. These visual cuts organize the messiness of the world—the dirt, if you will, that falls out of place—and, in the case of representation, reinforce the humanist stance as center, objective, and outside. With every visual cut between human and animal enacted within a representational framework, we are reassuring ourselves that everything *does* belong within these tidy frames, that we *are* in control of the swirling unknown and unknowable that is this universe, and that ultimately—in containing the dirt and fluids and messy, moveable relations—we may actually escape the death that awaits all animals. But as we will see in the following chapter, this visual framework is haunted by the

inevitable liminalities and undecidabilities that threaten its clean borders of representation.

The often troubling way animals are framed within visual media has become an increasing topic of study within the arts and humanities. In *An Introduction to Animals and Visual Culture*, Randy Malamud considers animal representations in a wide range of media, including: film, photography, fashion, Internet memes, and everyday speech. For Malamud, the act of framing animals within cultural screens of these kinds is a crime humans have been guilty of since the beginning of human culture. The crime—animal representation itself—displaces real animals from their natural habitats. According to Malamud, “first principles” of visual representations include animals being “made visible” and “acculturated” by this displacement or extraction of animals (6). He suggests it is in this framing that people colonize animal habitats (36).

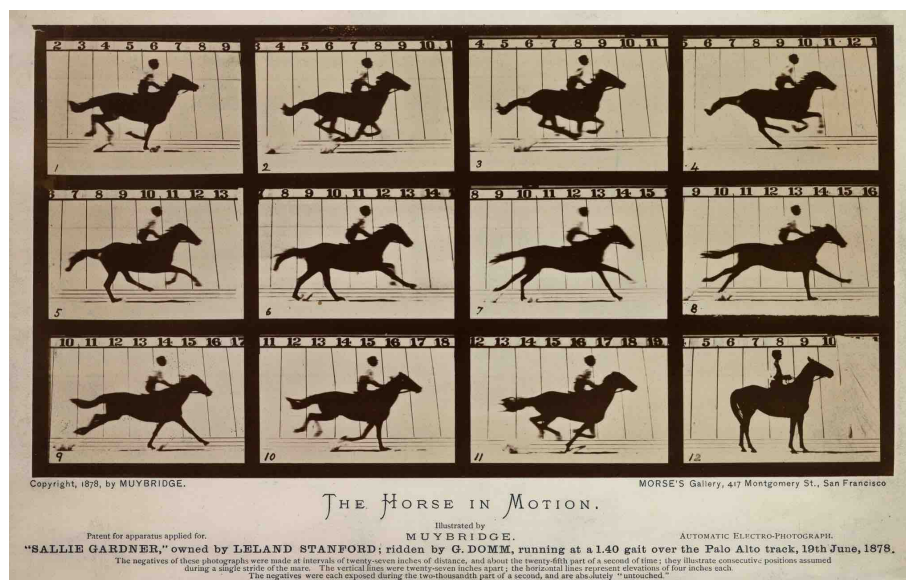


Figure 7. Eadweard Muybridge's "A Horse in Motion." *Animal Locomotion Volume 9*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1887; Web.

Since rhetoric as an evolutionary movement and relationality that enfolds and entangles is emphasized in previous chapters, perhaps the best place to begin looking at the abyssal cuts of animal representations is precisely where this movement *is* cut and broken down into discrete, discernable parts. Eadweard Muybridge's *Animal Locomotion* series is precisely this place.

As Malamud explains, Muybridge's revolutionary stop-motion photography in the late 1800s inspired the creation of film. With his "zoopraxiscope," Muybridge captured moving animal bodies in discrete frames (occasionally including the gendered human form¹). "The Horse in Motion" was especially popular for its ability to break down the movement of a horse's gallop, which could not otherwise be discerned with the naked eye. Malamud likens this to what Malek Alloula in *The Colonial Harem* calls the colonizer's—or *vivisector's*—gaze: "It is this same gaze that animates the photographer, that filters through the lens to catch in its aperture a reality that he [*sic*] has already begun to decompose" (Alloula 92). Alloula continues: "Photography is a stealer of souls. . ." (92). Malamud finds "similar incursions" in Muybridge's stop motion photography, "which violate the secrets so essential to animals' survival" (Malamud 63).

Muybridge performed hundreds of animal motion studies with his zoopraxiscope, creating eleven volumes published by the University of Pennsylvania from 1872-1885 (Muybridge *Animal*). Each animal is framed "against a backdrop of numbered scales and grids, the more convenient to chart and graph them" (Malamud 66). Malamud continues:

The animals are curiously reduced, caught in the mechanics, the physics, of photography. They are comprised not of flesh and blood and hair, but of silver albumen and paper. There are so many of them. . . that after a while, we cannot really see them at all. We certainly cannot hear them or smell them, or feel (as we do in proximity to a real horse) awesomely dwarfed by them.

Broken down by Muybridge and his apparati, they do nothing but run and run. Their force and motion no longer seem their own, but Muybridge's, and ours. . . I believe the horses themselves lose something in this transaction.

(66)

In this description of Muybridge's photos, Malamud shows how stark a line is drawn between the human observer and the animal object. The complex entanglements of humanimal and animal beings are cleanly severed by this precise pinning and dissection of movements. This calculating, violent grid-like organization is the very figure of Modernism, as Mark C. Taylor explains in *The Moment of Complexity*.

During this time, the clean formalism of the grid echoes a common assumption: "people are distinguished from animals by their ability to follow a straight-and-narrow line" (26). It is not surprising that the grid becomes a way of mapping and segmenting the messy biological movements of animal bodies in order to more fully grasp them. Indeed, as Berger notes, "[animals] are the objects of our ever-extending knowledge. What we know about them is an index of our power, and thus an index of what separates us from them. The more we know, the further away they are" (16).

Malamud seems to also echo Irmgard Emmelhainz in his concern over the sheer number of images in Muybridge's form studies: "There are so many of them. . . that after a while, we cannot really see them at all" (Malamud 66). We can no longer see the real, embodied animals and their fluid movements, since pictures in this series are flat, frozen, and distorted. Berger notes this tendency of photography toward distortion in *About Looking*: "The image seized by the camera is doubly violent and both violences reinforce the same contrast: the contrast between the photographed moment and all others" (43). Yet there is no answer to this inherently violent representational framework within Malamud's critique, because he still seeks the real, individual animal and its return to a natural habitat out "there" somewhere, divorced from our observation. As Malamud states: "It is difficult, if not impossible, to find in these human representations an objectively true account of who animals are" (6).

The inability for Malamud to get out of this representational framework is understandable; at the foundation of his critique is a system of familiar binaries: human/animal, nature/culture, subject/object, representation/real. This conundrum becomes interesting once domestic animals enter the scene, given that domestic animals significantly trouble these binaries. Cats and dogs for example, so often featured as the actors in viral images and memes with "LOLspeak" and "doge," have no natural habitat to return to. What crime is committed by the viral "Happycat" meme and its accompanying text: "I can has cheezburger"? How are real human-cat relationships affected by the 8-bit animated Pop-Tart/feline bouncing

through space on a rainbow?² It is difficult to imagine how these silly images could be harmful on any level. Clearly people love their cats and the goofy images of them. Under further scrutiny, the amusement that prompts these seemingly innocuous images proves to be symptomatic of a more insidious stance toward animals, even in the domestic sphere. Malamud argues that the fascination with all this cute is a derogatory feminization in which animals become the “dumb blondes” for the desiring male (or in this case human) gaze (74-75). “LOLspeak,” “doge,” and “moon moon” clearly evoke this dumb animal perspective. Doge is constructed with a series of two-word “dog phrases” that are created from a small list of modifiers, including “so, such, many, much, and very,” which are then mismatched with nouns or verbs not typically paired in normal speech (McCulloch). After a few of these two-word dog



Figure 8. Photograph of the original “Happy Cat” meme with characteristic “LOLcat” language; Web.

phrases, the doge meme typically ends with one word in its simplest form, like “wow, amaze, or excite.” For example, a spoof ad for “Fifty Shades of Doge” reads: “such kink. very sex. wow” (McCulloch). LOLcat, on the other hand, relies on a variety of spelling, typographical, and grammatical errors to form its recognizable language play³. These languages are interesting in their linguistic construction and (surprising) “rules”, but to anthropomorphize animals with infant-directed or

diminutive human language certainly does the animal image no favors. Animals are “dumb” when set to anthropocentric standards, and this makes them cute and entertaining for our colonizing human gaze.

Further evidence of “dumb animals” in visual culture is another pet: a domestic rabbit named Oolong. Oolong became famous with a series of “head performances” in which random objects are balanced on his head, including (but not limited to): “tea cups, an apple, an orange, a carrot, a piece of dried seaweed, a sesame bun, a book, a compact disc, a tea kettle, a lit candle” and “even a rabbit skull” (Malamud 34). Beginning in 1999, Oolong’s owner posted hundreds of these images on a daily blog, the most famous of which earned Oolong the nickname “Pancake Bunny.” After Oolong’s death in 2003, the meme “I don’t know what you’re talking about. . . so here’s a bunny with a pancake on its head” began circulating online, and as recently as 2010, two Facebook fan pages were created honoring the bunny (“Pancake Bunny”).

Flipping through a photo gallery of Oolong on *The Telegraph*'s website, one is offered links to similar memes, including "cat sandwiches" and a blog called "Food



Figure 9. Photograph of "Cold Spaghetti" from Andrew J. Small's *Food on My Dog* blog; Web.

on My Dog" that, predictably, features a dog balancing various food items on her head ("Food"). One image of "Food on My Dog" has a Staffordshire Terrier named Tiger sitting patiently with cooked spaghetti covering half of her face. In the image's caption, her owner reassures *The Telegraph* viewers, "I wouldn't do it without giving her a

reward." Apparently this Tumblr blog has become popular enough that Tiger's owner "is now getting requests on what Tiger should balance next" ("Food").

We are not able to return domestic animals to a natural habitat, because their natural habitat *is* our habitat. What are we to then make of these animal images? What does it mean that we find these images "cute" or amusing? How does that translate into our perceptions of pets and animals more broadly? Images of domestic animals are foregrounded with an inherent ontological entanglement in human lives. One would think it would be easier to *see* this entanglement, but the treatment of domestic animals as amusing or cute props can seem especially objectifying. Images of pets balancing, draped with, or adorned with objects are

rampant on social media sites like Instagram. For example, during one holiday season, a black and white photo of a dog wrapped in brightly lit Christmas lights appeared in my Instagram feed. The animal can still be found posing, forever frozen in this image, with a tilted head as if in response to a vocal cue. The only caption accompanying the photo is a string of 24 hashtags to maximize visibility, including #dogsofinstagram, #healthypet, and #pets_perfection (Culp). This photo is couched within a typical amateur Instagram account, amongst photos of family and everyday happenings (in other words, it is not an account devoted to a pet covered in objects). There is no overt indication that the pet owner feels anything but adoration for this dog, who is featured regularly in her everyday dog-ness: on a leash in the park, cuddling in bed, watching a grasshopper. The context in which this one unsettling image is found further highlights the complexity of pet-owner entanglements. What are we doing wrapping pets in lights—an arguably dangerous activity—and posting pictures of this on social media?

If we assume the most critical stance in regard to these animal-object images, the pets within are rendered silent, marginal, and—as Malamud argues—subaltern (40). Animals are physically surmounted by a pancake, limp spaghetti, Christmas lights . . . the particular object itself matters little. What does matter is the ellipsis following a seemingly endless list of objects that can be made to surmount an animal. Animals multiply in these memes as part of the décor of our everyday lives, and yet they are rendered amusing by the tacit acknowledgment that they have no more being than the mute objects we make them carry. According to Malamud, this

framed animal is “a prop, the sideshow star who is completely unaware of how funny he [*sic*] is, and that makes it even funnier. He is at the same time the center of visual attention, and wholly absent” (39).

Considering the audience for these various memes is most likely composed of pet owners, it is curious that what seems to be communicated is a prevailing disinterest in animals as beings. It would seem that pet ownership is a wholly anthropocentric, selfish pursuit. Berger describes the unique phenomenon of pets in a similar way:

The pet is either sterilised or sexually isolated, extremely limited in its exercise, deprived of almost all other animal contact, and fed with artificial foods. This is the material process which lies behind the truism that pets come to resemble their masters or mistresses. They are creatures of their owner’s way of life. . . . Equally important is the way the average owner regards his [*sic*] pet. . . . The pet *completes* him, offering responses to aspects of his character which would otherwise remain unconfirmed. (14, his emphasis)

The unique relationship between humanimals and their pets, animals who share our intimate spaces and who are also—in more unfortunate cases—abandoned to shelters or wandering ill-suited in “the wilds” outside our private homes, creates additional complexity in these entangled visual becomings.

“Cute” and funny animals, even in the domestic space, find themselves ripe for commodification—the ultimate abyssal cut between two categories. Most of the

memes I have mentioned so far offer merchandise for sale; links on websites scream: “Visit the nyan cat store!”; “Foodonmydog Shirts!” Becoming commodities is dangerous for animals, which manifested most explicitly with the zoos of colonialism. Some of us may find it surprising that the first stuffed animals for children, which were inspired by exotic zoo animals newly available to the 19th-century human gaze, were covered with “the skin of still-born calves” (Berger 23). If any practice makes clear the certainty that looking at cute animals has nothing to do with real animal lives, it is this: stripping newly born animals—cute when animated with life—of their intimate materiality, their *skin*, in order for this materiality to package children’s toys. With the proliferation of screens on which we can display more and more cute animal packages seeking attention, the danger of cute is just as real today.



Figure 10. Photograph of the posed “Rodeo Frog” taken by Henry Mp. The frog’s mouth is open, which is an indication of distress. *Daily Mail*; 13 Feb 2015; Web.

In an article titled “The Cruel Cost of Cute,” zoologist Rob Sullivan explains how common it is for photographers to stage cute animal images for a profit. Cute and amusing images are an industry, and one way of ensuring these qualities is to depict animals engaged in anthropomorphic behavior. An image went viral in February of 2015 depicting a frog riding a Rhinoceros beetle. One of the frog’s arms was raised in the air much like a bull-rider’s arm would be. Its mouth also hung open in apparent excitement. You can almost hear the frog squeal “yee-haw!” It is truly a stunning photograph. According to an online article in *Daily Mail*, the photographer says he just happened to stumble across this unlikely pair near his house in Indonesia (Rahman). Since this photo went viral, Sullivan and others familiar with amphibian behavior have pointed out that frogs only open their mouths in such a way “in times of extreme distress,” like when they are literally within the clutches of death (Sullivan).

Photographer Jenn Wei has documented on his blog this surge of amazing photographs taking place in Indonesia, which includes images of “a fire ant standing on one leg,” a number of tree frogs holding leaf “umbrellas” to shield themselves from rain, African land snails (not native to Indonesia) crossing rivers while admiring their reflections, a red-eyed tree frog (also not native to Indonesia) giving “the fingers” [*sic*], and a number of other extraordinarily human-like poses typically alien to (and often times physically impossible for) these species (Wei). Even chimps, so similar to humans in many ways, only smile when they are nervous (Sullivan). Yet, despite the fact that “these photos have almost certainly been staged,

and have almost certainly resulted in the animal being distressed, injured, or worse,” the images sell and social media shares climb (Sullivan).

Another result of this economy of cute is what Sullivan refers to as photography farms. These farms and roadside zoos operate solely for the purpose of breeding large exotic animals like bears and lions for commercial photographers who require images of “cute” cubs for various products (Sullivan). As one can imagine, the animals in these establishments are kept as cheaply as possible, confined to small cages and denied adequate medical care. When photographers do request these animals for shoots, the photos are staged to make it appear as though the cubs are in a natural environment. But cubs do not stay little and cute forever. Once they outgrow their commercial purpose in photography, the adult animals often find themselves as a new type of commodity in places like the lucrative industry of canned hunting (Sullivan). This kind of “trophy hunting” of exotic animals in enclosed areas has been steadily growing in places like South Africa, where wealthy Americans and Europeans will pay a hefty price (5-25 thousand euros) if it means a guaranteed success (Barkham). In the case of photography farms, the camera’s metaphoric “trigger” used to “shoot” its subjects eventually becomes a reality. In *Camera Lucida*, Barthes contemplates the palpable death within photographic frames: “I observe with horror an anterior future of which death is the stake. . . . Whether or not the subject is already dead, every photograph is this catastrophe” (96). But there are likely no punctums to be found in the staged

images of cute baby animals printed on calendars and mugs. The real “catastrophe” entangled in these photos goes unnoticed.

When people began posing for “selfies” with starving sea lion pups on the California coast in early 2015, the social capital of cute wild animals once again illuminated our ignorance of real animal lives. *The New York Times* reports on this desperate situation in which thousands of starving sea lion pups began appearing on beaches, wandering from their homes on the Channel Islands in search of food. While 2015 is not the first year starving pups found themselves on California beaches, the number has significantly escalated with rescuers reporting “five times more sea lion rescues” than in previous years (Healy). Predictably, this results in more encounters with humans who often see them as simply cute baby animals: “Some people offer misguided help such as dousing the pups with water or trying to drag them back into the ocean. Others take selfies with the stranded animals, pet them or let their children pretend to ride them” (Healy). Family pictures of children riding starving sea lion pups is yet another case of animals physically surmounted in images. As reported by the local Los Angeles news station KTLA 5 News, teenagers were also seen posing with the dying pups for prom photos. The selfies, however, seem to be nothing compared to other cruel and abusive behaviors rescuers have reportedly witnessed (Montoya).

Selfies as a medium through which we depict our relationships with animals is an interesting phenomenon. While the rhetoric of selfies has gotten much attention, with opinions of them ranging from illustrations of systemic narcissism to

displays of self-confidence in young girls to more complex assemblages of “the intimate self, public spaces, locative technology, and digital social networks” (Hess 1630), at least one thing would seem certain: selfies are posed, visual performances of the “I.” The spaces and people captured in physical relation to this “I” tell a shareable, digital story. In this sense, selfies constitute a kind of visual autobiography in which our worlds and perspectives are revealed. In the case of the dying sea lion pups, the physical proximity of these animals to the “I” illustrates—rather than closeness and intimacy—a distinct self-distancing; the human and sea lion could not be further apart. In such selfies, the “I” is completely severed from Animal.

In “Autozoography: Notes Toward a Rhetoricity of the Living,” Diane Davis explains how “autodeixis, the self-reflexive power of the ‘I,’” the use of which characterizes the selfie genre, is yet another ability that has been presumed to cleanly sever human from animal, especially in rhetorical studies (535). Of course, this self-reflexivity presumes an ability for the human to detach herself from “nature,” reflecting as an ostensibly objective onlooker, while the animal is entangled in an inescapable relationship with its world. Davis uses Bataille’s metaphor from *Theory of Religion* of animals as being “in the world like water in water” to illustrate this (Bataille 24). This human objectivity and distancing from the world is precisely what Barad argues against with examples of quantum entanglement, and Davis poses a similar objection from within continental philosophy. An autobiography—the writing of the “I am”—relies, after all, on a

representation of the self to the self: “The I is generated, each time, in the gap between me and myself, between the one recognizing and the one recognized, where an extrahuman rhetorical relation plays out” (Davis 537). The argument arises from Derrida: “what this animal is, what it will have been, what it would, would like to, or could be is perhaps what I am (following)” (Derrida 33). In selfie autobiographies, an instant of this following is sedimented in the photograph, frozen always as an “I” that I will never be again: the animal I am following which is exposed in the materiality of the image. Barthes refers to this paradoxical capture as “an anterior future” (96). While on the one hand these sea lion selfies reveal the stark contrast between human and animal so palpable in visual culture, on the other, they also reveal the human as the rhetorically entangled humanimal, despite all apparent ignorance.

Sea lion selfies also reveal a sense of what Emmelhainz argues; the deluge of images (of which selfies are an unquestionable part, so easily taken and then forgotten or discarded) actually makes it more difficult to see the reality of our detrimental practices. Assuming most sea lion selfie photographers are simply after a “cute” picture with a unique and wild animal, this ignorance of our hazardous actions is implicitly displayed on at least two levels: 1) ignorance of the climate change that causes sea lion mothers to spend prolonged periods of time searching for food, during which time starving pups wander away in their own desperate search, and 2) ignorance of the distress human contact and physical manipulation can cause on the already imperiled pup bodies. The overt abuse also mentioned in

news stories, in which “people throw rocks at the sea lions, throw soda on them, poke them with their surfboards” and even kick them, is alarming on an entirely different scale (Morrison). These actions are arguably what arise from the willful ignorance of the unique and separate “I” displayed in practices like sea lion selfie photography. These selfies are the images printed on Berger’s black curtain. Since animals are constructed within a representational framework as wholly other, any latent desire to inflict abuse or cruelty on someone finds a more acceptable outlet in animals. As Akira Lippit suggests in *Electric Animal: Toward a Rhetoric of Wildlife*, “Animals, or rather images of animals, mediate the violent act. . . Violating the image of the animal allows one to exceed the permissible limits of human violence” (181).

So what do all these images—these strange ways of visualizing animals—ultimately amount to? How do we move forward? Malamud’s answer to whether or *how* humans should look at animals is that “we keep our ‘ethical caps’ always on, despite the certainty that our perspectives and our insights are incomplete” (6). These “ethical caps” prompt the “simple ethical question” for Malamud: “do [cultural representations] do more good than harm?” (6). This sounds like a reasonable question, but the kind of utilitarian accounting therein poses undeniable issues. Some examples of animals in visual culture offer easy answers, as when Malamud discusses specific animals in film: the horse “forced to leap to his death from the top of a cliff” in the 1939 film *Jesse James* (71) and Topsy the circus elephant who was executed via electrocution in a short film by Thomas Edison (25). Even the staged commercial photographs of animals behaving in extraordinary ways, the

photography farms created to cater to exotic animal photographers, and the sea lion selfies offer persuasive examples of practices that cause more harm than good. But in the case of Muybridge's stop-motion photography, the nyan cat bouncing on a rainbow, the playful languages of LOLcat and doge, and the pets posing under random objects, how *exactly* does one count harm vs. good? And how are these terms defined? Even dead animal bodies—permanently frozen in motion by the art of taxidermy, pinned beneath glass on an entomologist's board, posed with a trophy hunter—bring to the fore complicated issues in our relationships with animals, issues that require careful and nuanced consideration. Malamud's ethical question is not so simple. Without a nuanced analysis or an accounting for these practices, the only answer to our humanimal-animal dilemma in visual culture seems to be to *not look at animals at all*. But if this crime of representation is something humans have been committing since the beginning of culture, as Malamud suggests, it is unlikely to cease in our highly visual information economy. We would appear to be at an impasse.

Malamud does find examples of animals that seem to elude representation by escaping the visual frame, receding into darkness, and becoming blurred in movement. These examples, including photography by Britta Jaschinski, will be given closer attention in the following chapters on how we can more responsibly engage in looking with animals and, by doing so, even extend an opportunity for animals to look back. Barad and other new materialists have also inspired

performative practices with animals in contemporary art, and it is here we turn next.

What Can Contemporary Art Add?

Can art then contribute to the defining of new and multi-focal perspectives on nature and the animal in order to move us beyond ourselves?

—Giovanni Aloi *Art & Animals* xxi

Our art-making process is concerned with a collaborative, mutual response to nature at its most primitive and wild. . . When possible we incorporate the track, print, spoor or bite of the animal in our work, documenting the habitat or the passing of a creature that is here now but may not be for much longer. This interaction can be viewed as evidence to an event, a form of primal investigation; a physical performance of the senses.

—Olly and Suzi “Artist’s Statement”

In the preface to Giovanni Aloi’s *Art & Animals*, Aloi discusses an “unlearning” that must take place in order for us to undo “old habits” of how we regard animals, such as the habits of looking discussed above. Echoing Barad’s agential realism, Aloi reflects on the exigency of this unlearning of “Animal”: “. . . now more than ever before, finding new perspectives from which to understand life may radically change who we are, where we are going and who we are going there with, for global warming, environmental decay and mass extinction are all clear indices of the

wrongness of our approaches” (xxi). Aloï believes contemporary art offers examples of how this unlearning can move forward to alternative understandings and practices. Media theorist and Professor Jussi Parikka seems to agree and suggests that, rather than simply critical analyses of current practices, “we need accounts of ‘weird materialities’ that haunt technical media culture,” that haunt the impossibilities created by the old habits of looking with a representational framework (Parikka).

The work of contemporary artists may seem an unlikely place to find more responsible visual animal encounters. Malamud critiques many of these works in his book, including the “transgenic art” of Eduardo Kac’s *GFP Bunny*; Nathalia Edenmont’s taxidermied animal heads; and several of Damien Hirst’s works, including his well-known “shark floating in formaldehyde” formally titled *The Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living* (131). There are a number of other unsettling artworks involving animals, the most unsettling of which are works involving real animal bodies. Two particularly controversial works include Marco Evaristti’s *Helena*—an installation piece of ten goldfish within blenders, fates suspended and left for exhibition visitors to decide—and Kim Jones’s *Rat Piece* (Baker 4-13). *Rat Piece* was a one-time, on-stage performance Jones created in 1976 in which he ultimately lit three caged rats on fire and let them gradually burn to death in front of an audience. He stated many years later that his motivation was wanting the audience to “experience the smell of death” (qtd. in Baker 5).

While these artworks are gruesome and “undoubtedly paid insufficient attention to the well-being of the animals they used. . . primarily for symbolic purposes,” artist Steve Baker argues that these particular works are the unfortunate few of an otherwise overwhelmingly insightful trend in contemporary art toward seriously engaging real humanimal-



Figure 11. Artists Olly & Suzi seek a trace of the animals they witness on location. “Tiger”; Web.

animal issues (4). Baker’s stance is that it is in contemporary art that we can find the creators of images thoughtfully entangled in their media and in the philosophical relations they wish to engage. This is quite the contrast to the cute and amusing Internet memes, the ignorantly posed selfies, and the mass exploitive practices arising from within a thoughtless industry of animals in popular visual culture. Contemporary art allows one to draw an alternative *pharmakon* to the typical viral animal image.

Olly and Suzi are contemporary artists who create their animal paintings and drawings on location *collaboratively*, as in “hand over hand on the same painting at the same time” (Olly and Suzi “Artist’s Statement”). This unique co-performative technique subverts the creative genius of a single, individual artist. Rather than using animals as symbols for an anthropocentric meaning, the artists’ meaning in creating these works is to trace the co-mingling of humanimal and animal tracks

within a lived time and space. These are performances of art that leave their marks on the page—never to be retraced or relived: “When possible we incorporate the track, print, spoor or bite of the animal in our work, documenting the habitat or the passing of a creature that is here now but may not be for much longer” (Olly and Suzi “Artist’s Statement”). One of their most well-known artworks is the painting of a Great White Shark they created underwater that was subsequently bitten by that same shark.

As Baker points out, the particular materials used by these artists matter greatly in the work they create (26). To paint sharks underwater, the duo “mounted . . . handmade papers onto polystyrene boards and used non-toxic water based paints, graphite and oil sticks” (Olly and Suzi “Ocean Trip”). This illustrates a thoughtful artistic making that is aware of the particularities of lived animal beings and the humanimal-animal entanglements of worlds. Olly and Suzi’s works also have a primitive and unfinished quality. These artists work from the energy and impressions given by the environment and animals at the specific time of the drawing. Rather than valuing realism and therefore capturing the entirety of an animal’s image within a given frame, Olly and Suzi allow the mysterious and unknown animals to escape. As viewers we are unable to completely know and objectify the animal by *looking*. While Olly and Suzi describe their artwork as “primarily about representation and symbolism,” I would have to strongly disagree—particularly in light of Barad’s agential realism (“Artist’s Statement”).

These two artists epitomize the embodied, material entanglement of co-produced lives and worlds.

Other contemporary artists have more consciously engaged Barad's agential realism as an alternative way of making and intra-acting with animals and worlds. Two special issues of *Antennae: The Journal of Nature in Visual Culture* are devoted to precisely such artworks. In "Toward a Performative Multispecies Aesthetics" within issue 31 of this dedicated series, artist Madeleine Boyd discusses her 2013 exhibition *Intra-action: Multispecies Becomings in the Anthropocene*, which featured an aggregate of artists engaging in intra-action artistic practices:

The exhibition process included moving through scales, temporalities, species and geo-political localities as well as the agential forces of matter, the materiality of ideas and bodies merging and emerging in the ongoing process of becoming. . . It provided a space in which intra-action as an idea had permeated through the boundaries of art practice. (9-10)

Boyd marries the quantum physics of Barad's agential realism with the "multispecies ethnography" of Stephen Helmreich and Eben Kirksey—"multispecies" being a term that refers to "the breadth of life" rather than simply the categories of human and animal (14). In keeping with this inclusive "breadth of life," artworks within the exhibition, and revisited in this issue of *Antennae*, include a video installation of Australian Goliath stick insects, live performative interruptions by *Lady Godiva and Her Horse*, the live interactive assemblage of *Ass Milk Soap*, and other multispecies works in a variety of media.

The contemporary artists and artworks directly and performatively engaging Barad's agential realism offer much in the way of an alternative engagement with all of life. However, in "Toward a Performative Multispecies Aesthetics," Boyde advocates an abandonment of certain visual modes of creation, citing Cary Wolfe's argument that the visual is indiscriminately anthropocentric (17). Boyd adds to this objection of anthropocentrism "that popular visual aesthetics of today are particularly associated with visual marketing . . . it follows then that some forms of visual media are also complicit with capitalist growth economy values, and so inherently undermine non-human species justice" (17). Within "some forms of media" to be excluded, then, falls photography. Although I do not disagree with the overarching argument concerning the problems with these visual modes (given the problematic examples studied throughout this chapter), it seems naïve to simply leave these modes behind, especially given the desire of new materialism-inspired artists to provoke real change in our ontological entanglements with multispecies life. If these changes are to occur—if different configurations of the world are to arise based on our practices—they cannot be relegated to the purely artistic realm, which seems to be where the primary audience for Boyd's argument resides. On the contrary, my argument is that it is precisely because of this popularity of modes like photography for creating our everyday knowledges and autobiographical accounts of the world that new photographic practices must be theorized and performed by the average person outside of the gallery or exhibition space. And this was precisely Wolfe's question: *what does art add* to our everyday understanding of the

detrimental practices we engage in? Not: what should art take away? Baker responds to Wolfe's question by stating that "art *doesn't* bring answers, or certainties, or 'information' in any straightforward sense," but rather, "art's role, and art's strength" lies in "the difficult messy middle of things" where these questions—entangled between shores—are materially enfolded (175, his emphasis; 179; 177). Indeed, what is needed in a "Baradian" sense of configuring the world with our material-discursive entanglements is an unsettling of borders and identities without reaching for pretty "certainties" about reality. What is needed is process, is movement, is trusting in these unclear and "messy" becomings that leave the gallery and infect everyday practices. What is needed is a less distinct idea of categories and a different understanding of what it means to look.

CHAPTER FOUR

HAUNTINGS



Figure 12. Photograph of author's dog. "Memphis"; print; 2014.

To write this, the memoir of your body, I slip my arms into the sleeves of your shirt. I slip my arms into yours, to become four-limbed.

Bhanu Kapil *Humanimal* 15

What is this moment called when we suddenly recognize what we have never seen? And which gives us a joy like a wound?

Hélène Cixous *Stigmata* 33

Meadow had the smallest white hairs on her chin, barely perceptible except by touch or by the seeing that comes with intimate moments of living with, *being* and

feeling-with, another being. She also had a black line around one eye, on her white side, deep and inconsistent like ink that soaks into paper. This inking came with age; when she was a puppy, only her pink new skin was visible around this eye—an eye that had seen so little of the world yet. I *saw* Meadow, and—based on a lifetime of wordless yet seamless interaction—I can only assume that she saw me. I suppose the most significant part of this assumption is not that it is true but that I *felt* seen. This is of course a seeing that goes beyond a mere looking. It is a palpable knowing and acknowledgement. It was an attunement to her being, and these small visual details—the swirl of soft white fur on her chest, the slender and fatty parts of her legs, her delicate paws—became especially significant following her death. When I look for Meadow in images now, I am not so encumbered as Barthes seeking his mother in photographs. These little physical details exceed the flat vision I use to see them, and at once I am overwhelmed by her physical presence in the room with me—her animal body—scratching, turning, and eventually settling warm against my memories. They are brief, if painful, recollections.

Following Chapter 3, it becomes apparent that animals in visual culture—while seen in the ordinary sense—are also simultaneously and systematically *not* seen. In “A Rhetorical Look at Ecosee,” Sean Morey points out that “Even images that present animals positively still portray them as objects” (42). What is rendered visible as animal, whether as “happy cat” or an archetypal “econ” like the World Wildlife Fund for Nature’s panda, does not offer an authentic sense of animals as beings (Morey 33). Nor do these crude animal depictions offer a sense of our

entangled relation with them as their onlookers or as the humanimals sharing in what Barad calls “the extraordinary liveliness of the world” (91). These animals are but objects grasped by human eyes across a staggering ontological divide. In contrast to the grasping look that apprehends animals in so much of visual culture, this chapter reaches—with extended, offering hand—for another way of looking. This reaching implicates the enfolding epistemological and ontological contours of the body, the darkness and movement of these folds of organic becoming, and the material death in which we all share, which, Michelle Ballif argues, is necessary for any rhetorical (therefore ethical) relation.

First I wish to consider more closely the looking relation experienced in the presence of physical manifestations of other beings—as with Meadow living, breathing next to me—and also with those traces—those *hauntings*, if you will—from images. Domestic animals are certainly an appropriate starting place. As Berger notes decades ago: animals have stopped returning our look in most other relations. While wild animals and livestock are now systematically severed from everyday human lives (and here I am speaking in a very Western sense) domestic animals are unique in their proximity and therefore ability to return the look. This explains the proliferation of strange Internet cat and dog memes as well, as I argue in Chapter 3. As Jacques Derrida has famously made apparent in his musings of being naked in front of his cat, domestic (nonhuman) animals are now the animals that return our look. It is especially notable, then, when stories of wild animals looking back do indeed surface.

Shining-Into

I could barely speak, the look in that whale's eye was haunting. He knew, he was aware, it was so plain to see. . .

Captain Paul Watson

In the quest for a more ontologically entangled looking relation with animals—a looking that is not the systemic grasping, objectifying looking of visual culture—Martin Heidegger's *Parmenides* offers an important unfolding¹. For Heidegger, in returning to the Greek translations of words that structure our ways of knowing and being in and with the world, looking is especially significant as one of the ways of being of *Aletheia*. *Aletheia*, literally “not-covered-over-ness,” is the divine revealing of truth and being. Or rather, *Aletheia* is truth, and looking—as one of *Aletheia*'s ways of being—unconceals or unveils otherwise hidden or covered truth and being. This is significant in our consideration of animals in visual culture particularly because Heidegger's project is concerned with overcoming the subject-object relation that structures “modern” (that is post- pre-Socratic Greek) thinking and entails a more profound phenomenological consideration of being through looking: “Thinking as moderns and



Figure 13. Photograph of a zoo elephant.
Britta Jaschinski; Web.

therefore insufficiently, but for us surely more understandably, we can say in short: the look is not looking as activity and act of the 'subject' but is sight as the emerging of the 'object' and its coming to our encounter" (103). Nothing short of the very essence of a person's being, "as the sum of his (*sic*) existence," is gathered in what Heidegger calls this "encountering," "self-showing" look.

In "Heidegger, Captain Paul Watson, and the Look of Leviathan," Luanne Frank helps explain the significance of looking and being in Heidegger's difficult articulations within his *Parmenides*. Heidegger makes it clear that this profound looking relation does not exist within a representational understanding of reality in which "man experiences looking only in terms of himself and understands looking precisely 'out of himself' as Ego and subject" and in which "man turns toward beings as 'objects' and grasps them" (Heidegger 103). Thus does the common phrase, "looking at," become an issue, as Frank explains:

"Looking *at*" carries with it undertones of a subject-object, rather than a reciprocal, way of relating to the other. Automatically objectifying the other, it registers a way of Being by way of which metaphysics is accustomed to speaking of and understanding the nature of its looking. Thus does one come to understand and appreciate Heidegger's much-used "looking into" and "shining into" as more adequately descriptive locutions, however strange they might at first seem, for a certain sort of looking. (595, *her emphasis*) (To this "reciprocal way of relating to the other" I would also emphasize Barad's entangled metaphysics, to which we will return). Looking can be the gift of "shining

into” rather than the taking or grasping looking *at*, and it is an act performed by being itself: “Being, Heidegger says here, by looking and shining into beings, delivers *itself* to and into them, gives them, or suffuses them with, Being” (591, her emphasis). This giving of being is performed by Greek deities as well as humans in what Heidegger calls an “encountering look,” or a looking that encounters being as it emerges unconcealed. As a foreshadowing of the potential importance this encountering look might play in relation to animals, Frank closely examines the three instances in which Heidegger describes this special *human* encountering look. In the first instance Heidegger describes the encountering look as:

a look that, not imposing itself on the one looked *at* (the other), instead extends itself *to* the other and both awaits the other as such (as it were, expectantly letting the other be) and awaits in return a reciprocal look from the other—whereupon, when that answering look is extended, both parties “are.” Receipt of the encountering look permits its recipient to show up, and the initiator’s receipt of the reciprocal look, in return, issues in his [*sic*] own being uncovered. (592, her emphasis)

This encountering look is one that is *extended* to rather than *imposed upon*. It is a giving, patient look—awaiting a reciprocity from the other that may not ever come—that simultaneously allows the other its ownmost being: “Receipt of the encountering look permits its recipient to show up” (592).

The giving extension of the look here is what will become most relevant in any animal encounter—not necessarily because animals cannot return this look, but

because we cannot know if this reciprocity is necessarily extended by animals and animals cannot extend a reciprocal look when their being looked at takes place in visual culture (Can it? To this I will return). The importance of this reciprocity is itself questionable. As Frank explains, in the second instance in which Heidegger discusses the encountering look, he does so entirely from the initiator's perspective: "In this description, Heidegger does not specify the reciprocating look as necessary to the encountering person's, the initiator's, coming to be" (593). Indeed, Heidegger's explanation of the initiator's looking as "self," as "essence," and as "existence" seems profound and complete enough on its own without any reciprocating look:

Looking is self-showing and indeed that self-showing in which the essence of the encountering person has gathered itself and in which the encountering person "emerges" in the double sense that his essence is collected in the look, as the sum of his existence, and that this collectedness and simple totality of his essence opens itself to the look. . . (Heidegger 103)

What are we then to make of the necessity of the reciprocating look or the weight of its effect for either being's being involved in the (awaited) exchange? Frank questions:

Does Heidegger take the sending of the reciprocal look for granted here in his second languaging of the encountering look, or does he rather, at least for the moment of this brief account, regard the encountering look that "awaits the other" (and in so doing presumably allows the other its ownmost ownness)

as already enough to grant both persons Being? We cannot finally know. (593, my emphasis)

Heidegger's third account of this encountering look suggests the importance he places on this reciprocity, though it is still not clear what we would make of such a look that *is not* reciprocated. As Frank notes, a look such as this encountering look would ideally be returned (593). But what of the absence of such a reciprocating look? The encountering look is still extended, or "granted," as a collection and opening of the initiator's "totality" of existence. . . awaiting return. As one of what will appear to be many departures from Heidegger, I wish to suggest looking through another lens—a diffractive lens, perhaps, that "involves reading insights through one another in ways that help illuminate differences as they emerge" and the productive patterns thus created (Barad 30)—to consider whether the initiating look could be considered enough "to grant both persons Being" without its reciprocation. In this case, the insights read across each other in an attempt to distinguish potential superpositions and emerging patterns that arise from Heidegger, Frank, and Barad.

As discussed in the previous chapter, Barad explains that material-discursive practices such as looking create agential cuts in the world, constructing reality rather than simply describing it. In discussing the limits of vision in determining bodily boundaries, Barad states that "objects are not already there; they emerge through specific practices" (157). These practices create what Barad refers to as "the primary ontological unit" of phenomena. Phenomena are "the ontological

inseparability of intra-acting ‘agencies’”—literally entangled being that makes separation of discrete bodies, objects, or beings from this phenomenon or ontological unit impossible (333). Indeed, it is only “through specific agential intra-actions that the boundaries and properties of the ‘components’ of phenomena become determinate and that particular material articulations of the world become meaningful” (333). Beings *come to be* within phenomena. Beings come to be within agential cuts of reality—within practices of looking, for our purposes. This implicates the encountering person, or the one initiating the encountering look, as always already entangled in the emergent being of the other. Furthermore, precisely as Heidegger explains regarding the specific type of “shining into” of being, the particularities of this looking—the gathering together of essence in the initiator’s look—*set the terms* for how this reality is constructed. This encountering look, is, in Barad’s terms, the measuring apparatus that *constructs* reality, which supports the tacit implication in *Parmenides* that the reciprocated look is a given (and, as Frank remarks, such a looking would ideally be returned), for these actions—the initiating and reciprocating look—are not discrete nor linear: they are mutually entangled in space, time, and being. Therefore, the implicit patience in a look *awaiting* reciprocation is lifted of significance. Indeed, such a patience in this looking would be perfect in its formulation. It needs no reciprocation, because it already *is*, and in its entanglement with the other, implicates—grants—both its own and the other’s being. In existing as a look that has gathered together the totality of a person’s

existence, opened within the looking gift for another being, it always already is its own unconcealing of being.

As discussed in Chapter 1, Barad's agential realism and the constitutive nature of practices like looking strongly implicate the ethical responsibility such looking entails. To repeat a significant quote in Barad:

Ethicality is part of the fabric of the world. . . Questions of responsibility and accountability present themselves with every possibility; each moment is alive with different possibilities for the world's becoming and different reconfigurings of what may yet be possible. (182)

Manifesting an encountering look for animals in visual culture that grants them their ownmost being is significant, for "each moment is alive" with the possibilities of becoming. It is not surprising, then, that Frank considers the profound looking described by Heidegger in relation to an event of ethical concern for animals.

In Frank's article, the specific encounter considered in relation to Heidegger's encountering look is that of Greenpeace co-founder Paul Watson and a harpooned male sperm whale. On this day in 1975 Watson was engaged with fellow activists Bob Hunter, George Korotva, Rex Weyler, and Fred Easton in an attempt to intercept a Soviet whaling vessel off the California coast. Watson and Easton manage to position themselves in the line of fire while attempting photographic documentation of their confrontation. While thusly engaged, the Soviet fleet harpooned a female sperm whale, causing her mate to rush toward her and the whaling vessel. After being harpooned himself, the male sperm whale appears to aggressively advance

upon the Zodiac carrying the two men—which would clearly not have survived such an encounter—when the whale suddenly pulls back and seems to take notice of the men:

His eye fell upon Fred and me, two tiny men in a rubber raft, and looked at us. It was . . . a gentle, knowing, forgiving gaze. Slowly . . . he settled into the quietly lapping waves. I had one more glimpse of that gazing eye, and then he was gone from our world. What had I seen? Was it understanding? We wept.

(Watson qtd. in Frank 599-600)

Of particular importance in reading this specific encounter against Heidegger's encountering look are two points. First, this experience—this look given and exchanged—is described by Watson as having a life-altering effect on his being as well as the trajectory of his life's work. Second, while Watson was already engaged in environmental activism, he was similarly extended in several other activist outlets. It was only after this encounter that Watson focused his efforts on marine life (Frank 599). It seems a profound unconcealing is what occurred that day, revealing for Watson a deep personal truth: "What I saw in his eye as he looked at me would change my life forever" (qtd. in Frank 601).

Is it important to know here whether Watson's experience, his "showing up," was somehow consistent with the whale's experience? We cannot know definitively, of course, what the whale experienced in giving that seemingly "forgiving gaze." Frank reminds us of new research on spindle neurons in whales that suggests complex social organization, language, and emotion, among other sophisticated

capacities (584-585). As argued in Chapter 2 of this dissertation, such insights are significant in both understanding our rhetorical becomings and our perceptions/conceptions of animals. However, Frank does not believe, and I would concur, that (not) knowing what the whale experienced that day—whether he was similarly changed or unconcealed in some way—matters in terms of the argument for this encountering look. Frank persuasively argues for “a cross-species analogue of what Heidegger describes as the encountering look between humans” (601). What Watson describes in this looking relation is clearly, without *any* doubt, an event in which his being is unconcealed in its intimate entanglement with this harpooned whale. This looking relation, perhaps initiated by Watson and Easton that day when they boarded the Zodiac with a specific purpose of intercepting the whaling fleet, created a manifestation of reality in which the whale looked at/into them, shining into them with perceived being, and now continues to live enfolded in the life commitment Watson has made to environmental activism. Since establishing the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society in 1977, Watson has now “been at the helm of over 225 ocean-going expeditions,” received a number of awards for his extraordinary service, including *Time Magazine*’s “Heroes of the Planet” and “Daily Points of Light” Award from President George H.W. Bush, and saved countless lives at sea through direct action campaigns (“Captain”).

Since the reciprocating look is arguably unnecessary for the profound “Being-uncovering”/“Being-enabling” phenomenon to occur, I wish to further argue that the encountering look can be extended from Frank’s *plausible* realm of

human/animal manifestations—already radically divergent from Heidegger’s original formulation—into the even more radically divergent realm of visual culture. Given Barad’s agential realist account of how meaning and reality are created with “specific material performances of the world” (335), it is clear that nothing short of real (hum)animal beings are at stake in the type of looking extended to/entangling with animals in visual culture. These are not merely visual representations of animals in question—they are very real creations of meaning and manifestations of world that intimately entangle us and animals in our co-beings and becomings.

The Dead and Dying Eye



Figure 14. Photograph of three bucks who became entangled during a mating competition and subsequently drowned. Steven Hill; “Triple Tragedy”; *Field & Stream*; Web.

And everything that we inscribe in the living present of our relation to others already carries, always, the signature of *memoirs-from-beyond-the-grave*.

Jacques Derrida *Memoires: For Paul de Man* 28

Alive I die piece by piece, I die several deaths before my own death. . . For this is the mystery of my body that stretches out beyond my body, my body at the mercy of your body.

Helen Cixous *Stigmata* 81

In moving the encountering look into visual media, there are two important points to consider/question that require careful return to Frank's article (we return here rather than to Heidegger, for Frank has granted us the plausibility of this cross-species exchange): the importance of visibility (/invisibility) and the importance of death (/birth). Each of these terms is complex in its own enfoldings and is mutually entangled with the other. It is with this mutual entanglement the rest of this chapter will unfold.

If we return to Frank's article, it becomes apparent that perhaps the key feature in this story's significance and what grants it the plausibility of Heidegger's encountering look is impending death. To be sure, the very reason that Watson and Easton set out on their voyage, for which Frank attributes their apparent look of Care toward the whale, is to intercept this harpooning on the part of the whales' lives. This, according to Frank, is the initiating look extended to the whales—an initiating look that apparently (though not necessarily) "made the circuit Heidegger

describes" (602) when the whale returns their look: "Cold salt water and steaming blood poured down onto us as I saw [his] eye appear before me, so close I could see my own reflection and it was at that point that something happened and my life was never the same again" (Watson). Again, let us take note, it is not simply a look from the whale that allegedly completes the circuit; it is, rather, the look with which, and with apparent acknowledgement, the whale pulls back and "saves" the men from an otherwise watery grave that he cannot himself escape:

... and suddenly I saw an incredible effort by the whale to halt his assault on us as his muscles clenched and the angle of his body changed so that he began to sink back into the sea alongside us rather than to crush us beneath him. I saw his eye sink into the deep blue of the sea and disappear and I knew that I was the last thing he saw before he died. (Watson)

The "shining into" and gift of being exchanged with animals, then, seems to be this mutual acknowledgement of the value of life—something in which we all share. Death, defined as it typically is in the negative against life, is what initiates the encountering look that grants Being to both the men and the whale that day in 1975². But perhaps it is what happens between these two terms—life and death—that constitutes the entanglement of being in this looking relation. What happens when we plunge into the dark, unseen depths of the ocean's abyss, an abyss that presumably delineates terms like life and death as well as human and animal?

In "Whale Fall," Rebecca Giggs allows us to imagine such a plunge by following the death—the fall—of a whale in the ocean. Giggs recalls a malnourished

humpback whale washing up on the Western Australian coast and the inner conflict locals endure during its slow, impending death while “the whale’s billiard-ball eyes tumbled in its head and its breathing sounded laboured. . . still intensely alive and tormented.” This beached whale, arriving as a reminder of mysterious depths, faces quite a different death than those that perish “very far out to sea.” As Giggs explains, whales that die in the ocean:

. . .simultaneously decay as they sink; they are continuously pecked at by fish, swimming crabs, amphipods and sharks attracted to the carcass. It takes a long time. Weeks, months. ... It drifts past fish that no longer look like anything we might call fish, but bottled fireworks, reticulated rigging and musical instruments turned inside out. The whale enters the abyssopelagic zone. No light has ever shone here, for so long as the world has had water.
(Giggs)

This fall into the abyss is long, cold, and dark. The whale body penetrates where light cannot. This fall is not something that can be seen with human eyes, it must be *felt* with the animal body. And with the whale fall thrives life:

Then [the whale skeleton] drops, falls quickly to the sea floor, into the plush cemetery of the worms. ... Rat-tails, devouring snails and more polychaetes appear. The bones are stripped and then fluff up with silver-white bacteria, so that it appears as if the skeleton is draped in metres of downy towelling. Years may pass, decades even, before there is nothing left except a dent that holds the dark darker. (Giggs)

The whale fall into abyssal depths is emblematic of the movement and entanglement between terms that have no real grounding. With every encountering look of entangled “self-showing” and “shining into” of being, initiated, perhaps, by threat of death and the tacit acknowledgment of our mutual complex enfoldings, is this whale fall—this haunting trace of what sustains us all with the complex, entangled matrix of life and yet is otherwise hidden.

Giggs’ whale fall also complicates the typical binary set up between life and death. As indicated in Chapter 2, there is no simple relation between these two terms. Instead, we (do not) see fish, worms, snails, and other forms of life depending upon and thriving from the falling skeletal remains of a massive marine mammal. Life and death are not at odds in this real biological entanglement in the ocean’s dark abyss; rather, life *encompasses, feeds on, is manifested in* death. Biological life does not end in any real sense: to talk of it ending is to deny knowledge of the whale fall and the porous outpouring of individual boundaries into the sea of being. Perhaps, as we shall see further, life is merely (both merely and *profoundly—grandly*) punctuated by deaths and births as they spiral over and enfold one another.

The dead or dying eye of animals and visual culture, when death is conceived as at odds with life, cannot return Heidegger’s look. But when life encompasses and enfolds, is punctuated by, death—can that life be breathed into a look such that it can “grant both persons being”—creating spectres of the dead? In addition to the hypothetical whale fall in the ocean, Gigg describes with exquisite, heart-wrenching

beauty the slow death of one whale on land. Although she mentions the whale's eyes twice, this encounter is quite obviously not one that "completes Heidegger's circuit" with a reciprocating, granting look as originally conceived by Heidegger (Frank 605). The whale is in far too much agony to offer any sense of inner-awakening, though the author (and one can imagine others in the group sleeping overnight on the dunes) seems profoundly changed: "I hovered as near as I was able to, speaking sometimes to the whale's blowhole. What felt important in that moment was the act of seeing this through to the end, of agreeing not to leave the whale alone. Kinship, I guess, is what we proffered" (Giggs). Is this less a self-showing or even a being-enabling look because the whale, in its agony, cannot satisfactorily return the look? On the contrary, it seems as if the whale's unconcealing, and even the gathering together of the totality of its essence and existence, occurs intensely over the three-day course of its death, with which many others intimately concern themselves.

There is something particularly jarring about starving marine animals washing up on land, bringing their abyssal depths with them. After all, our own evolution was dependent upon this same journey out of the ocean (now we keep this water folded within³). And each of us, individually, is born from unseen waters—enfolding and emerging as we must, nascent life-within-life. So it is that *life-as-birth* is expected to emerge from water rather than this slow and suffering, apparent miscarriage spewed from a mysterious beyond. Marine animals on land are a threat to the boundaries we create between categories like human and animal, mother and child, life and death that are secured by dark, abyssal depths and the

crypts/wombs within. When these depths open to expose our mutual entanglements, it is as if life were initiating its own look, and in encountering the starving whales and sea lions we are, in fact, encountering being in which we are intimately a part. (That is, of course, if we show up. The selfies and exploitations of these deaths prove such an encountering look is not one shared by all).

It would seem plausible then, given Giggs's account and accounts of others who witness death and dying and emerge forever transformed by the spectres thus created, that the material entanglement of an initiating look might also create the haunting trace of a whale fall within visual culture—in which the dead or dying eye/body cannot return the look despite its presence—and grant the observer being. In fact, I would suggest that such a look is the only hope for ethical entanglements in visual culture: these are the looks that offer more than simply what is visible. These are looks, rather, that hint at the darkness and complexity in the whale fall below—offering an alternative to representational frameworks of knowledge⁴.

Roland Barthes suggests a similar underlying complexity of the visible in his formulation of the punctum in photography. For Barthes, the idea of punctum—theorized in the wake of his mother's death and just prior to his own—is quite a transformation from his previous texts like *Mythologies* and "Rhetoric of the Image," in which structural analysis is used, according to Michael Halley in "Argo Sum," as "an intermediary buffer between himself and the objects of his attention" (72). This distance between the self and objects looked upon in photography is characteristic

of the ordinary grasping we aim to move beyond. In *Camera Lucida* we see this difference articulated in the studium and punctum. As Elissa Marder points out in *The Mother in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction: Psychoanalysis, Photography, Deconstruction*, it is noteworthy that Barthes uses a “dead” language like Latin to derive the terms that breathe (his [mother’s]) life into photography (154). As many are no doubt familiar, *studium* is that meaning that can be culturally derived from a photograph. *Punctum*, however, has a personal, intimate quality that pierces the observer in a very physical, potentially transformative way: “it is this element which rises from the scene, shoots out of it like an arrow, and pierces me” (Barthes 26). In further investigating this physical effect achieved by the punctum, Barthes attributes it to photography’s likeness to theater “by way of Death”:

We know the original relation of the theater and the cult of the Dead: the first actors separated themselves from the community by playing the role of the Dead: to make oneself up was to designate oneself as a body simultaneously living and dead. . . . Now it is the same relation which I find in the Photograph; however “lifelike” we strive to make it (and this frenzy to be lifelike can only be our mythical denial of the apprehension of death), Photography is a kind of primitive theater, a kind of *Tableau Vivant*, a figuration of the motionless and made-up face beneath which we see the dead. (31-32)

In Barthes’s hands, photography becomes a passage for bodies “simultaneously living and dead.” Photographs are hauntings: a medium through which to conjure: Cixous’s “tomb-cradle” (*Stigmata* xiv). John Berger likewise notes this mysterious

conjuring ability of photography in which beings “rub through the materialism of the image” (50).

In *Three Steps on the Ladder of Writing*, Cixous similarly locates this passage within the visual when she insists every great writer—that is, writers that teach us how to die, that take us to the depths of an abyss—has an inaugural scene of death: “First there is the picture, which we either enter or don’t enter. The duel—death—and the picture form a door, a window, an opening” (9). The birth-death of the writer are entangled in an image—a passageway. Cixous further explores this essential entangled relation of death, birth, and images when she turns to look into drawings in *Stigmata* (to which we shall return).

The complexity of this personal encounter—perhaps a reciprocating look to a punctum that “rises from the scene,” apparently of its own accord, “and pierces me”—is further illustrated in Barthes’s repeated return to, not just death and the seemingly violent toll of the punctum’s piercing sting, but the maternal body. Landscape photography “carr[ies] me back to somewhere in myself. . . awakening in me the Mother” (40). Barthes’s relation to photography becomes one in which “a sort of umbilical cord links the body of the photographed thing to my gaze: light, though impalpable, is here a carnal medium, a skin I share with anyone who has been photographed” (81).

Barthes further illustrates this real, material entanglement and potential for an encountering look much like Heidegger’s when he describes the movement and emergence of being that the punctum allows within an otherwise “motionless image.

...anesthetized and fastened down, like butterflies" (57). When Barthes "recognize[s], with [his] whole body" a punctum, suddenly he is standing there with the photographer, whose "'second sight' does not consist in 'seeing' but in *being there*" (45, 47, my emphasis). "Here," says Barthes, "the photograph really transcends itself: is this not the sole proof of its art? To annihilate itself as *medium*, to be no longer a sign but the thing itself?" (45).

The encountering look is most clearly articulated when Barthes finally "finds" his mother in a photograph and breathtakingly describes just what it is he sees there. Her very being seems to extend a look *to him* through their mutual material entanglement in this one photograph, and he *sees her*. He also encounters himself in this visual trace of his mother's history that preexisted his own being but already was the condition of its possibility. This contributes to the very definition of quantum entanglement and "weirdness": that phenomenon that exceeds and transforms ordinary notions of time, space, and distance. Barthes:

I studied the little girl and at last rediscovered my mother. The distinctness of her face, the naïve attitude of her hands, the place she had docilely taken without either showing or hiding herself, and finally her expression, which distinguished her. . . all this had transformed the photographic pose into that untenable paradox which she had nonetheless maintained all her life: the assertion of gentleness. In this little girl's image I saw the kindness which had formed her being immediately and forever. . . (69).

Barthes's overwhelming emotion at "rediscovering" his mother in this photograph is palpable upon reading, and it is why he never presents this photo—perhaps the most important image in *Camera Lucida*—to our view. We would not experience this look, this wound, as he does. It is a sacred haunting that pierces him through with "*the impossible science of the unique being*"—his mother's being, unconcealed to him (71, his emphasis). In *The Work of Mourning*, Derrida refers to this absence of the Winter Garden Photograph in *Camera Lucida* as the "radiant invisibility of a look that [Barthes] describes to us only as clear, so clear" (36). We do not see the look, but we share in the trauma it inflicts. We feel the fall—the passage into a darkness that simultaneously brings life.

Resistance to Barthes's corporeal dimension of photography and the very real attunement to being and being itself that is given through photographs is understandable, given how anesthetized we are to the representationalist thought that guides us. Such resistance is expressed by Marder when she refers to this entangled materiality as "at bottom, resolutely unthinkable and hence almost unreadable," "outrageous," and "crazy" (151). It is not *logical*, after all, for the physical body of the referent to adhere to the materiality of the photograph, for the photograph is a representation, a reflection of the true object of study, which is not present. According to Marder, Barthes's attachment to his mother and desire to find her within these photos is instead a fetishistic perversion. Barthes's "rhetorical excesses and logical inconsistencies" do not obey the staggering divide between what is lost through death and what stands as the living observer of the image

(152). Marder further says that there is *no trace* of the dead body in photography. Barthes's life and the liveliness of his look cannot breathe life into the flat materiality of his mother's dead image. In "Regarding the Dead," Michelle Ballif conjures Derrida to speak of this "traditional" scholarly perspective: "To suggest that there is no easy distinction between the living and the dead, between the (living) human and the (dead) specter, would engender—Derrida notes—'snickers from all those. . . who never believe anything, of course, because they are so sure that they see what is seen, everything that is seen, only what is seen'" (Ballif 455-456). Quite to the contrary, the staggering abyssal divide separating living/dead and human/animal opens a space in photographs for such hauntings of *différance*, indeed necessitates these hauntings as prior to any ethical rhetorical address—for it is the hauntings that signal the true depths of our interconnectedness—the ethicality with which we are all mutually interwoven. In photography we find traces of our entangled materiality; photographs exist in the folds of being as passages between impossible distances. Within this abyssal space, "this plural and repeatedly folding frontier" (Derrida *The Animal* 30), life flourishes, unseen.

In "Argo Sum," Halley suggests Barthes's underlying desire to find his deceased mother in photographs is the same playful movement as that of Freud's grandson's famous "fort/da" game outlined in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. Such a seeking, says Halley, patterned in Barthes's finger and nail punctums, is practice in mastering his mother's absence: "Not until her death can he write *Camera Lucida* in a room, a space, finally cleared of his mother's real presence, can he then play with

the presence of her absence, just as Freud's grandson plays with his reel in the privacy of his own room, in the real absence of his mother" (76). Such a game of representation is certainly not the encountering look we are reaching for. This is because Halley fails to see the palpable being that emerges in these traces of the finger. Thinking simply in terms of representation and the absence and presence of a subject/object pair is to miss the depth of significance of the maternal in *Camera Lucida*.

The maternal significance in *Camera Lucida* is illuminated with Heidegger's encountering look: for, to experience the encountering look as it is given by the initiator without necessary concern for reciprocation (as we have outlined above, given the nonlinear entanglement of the phenomenon)— and, as Heidegger says, "in which the essence of the encountering person has gathered itself and. . . 'emerges' . . . collected in the look, as the sum of [her] existence"—is perhaps most ideally realized when a mother first looks upon her child. For many mothers, seeing this small creation that has slowly been growing and enfolding within, inseparable and indistinguishable from the self, emerge for the first time into the world is to experience the gathering of one's essence and totality of existence in this moment of birth. These moments are captured in Kristen Hedges's self-published collection of photos and stories from mothers: she quotes Kristen Miller: "As soon as I saw his face, as soon as they placed him on my now empty womb, I became someone else. In that very moment, I was transformed, evolved reborn. His birth and my rebirth

happened simultaneously, and only because I carried him did I get to carry myself” (Hedges 13).

Immediately following this traumatic physical performance of moving another body through one’s own and out into the world, an infant (barring extenuating circumstances) is again enveloped by the mother’s body—this time in her arms, against her naked chest—still attached by the cord but now outside where the mother sees her or him for the first time. Rachel Henry:

What I do remember and will never forget is when my midwife told me to reach down and pull my son out. As I wrapped my hands around his warm, slippery body, his eyes opened. I pulled him up to cradle him on my belly, the umbilical cord too short to bring him up further, and I felt the pain pour out of my body like water. [...] Later that night, while everyone else slept, my son lay in my arms, wide awake for the longest time, and just stared at me. His eyes moved slowly around my face, memorizing me, and I memorized him.

(Henry qtd in Hedges 22)

This is the primal scene—this birth scene, which, like one’s own death, cannot be experienced *as* one’s own. And yet it is here that the originary being-enabling look is given by the mother who grants it with no need or even thought of reciprocation. For, as with Watson’s whale and all other animals, we cannot—*need not*—know if such an encountering look as this is reciprocated by infants. It is also here that every “shining-into” ultimately returns to experience the gathering and totality of one’s

own existence and acknowledgement of this birth-death entanglement with another: another whale fall.

In “Accidental Metaphysics: What Animals Don’t Think About,” Cynthia Haynes responds to Frank’s article by returning to the first time she sees her daughter on the back of a dappled gray horse:

Eighteen years of lost mothering came to a boil in an uncanny alchemy of wonder and weeping as I bore witness to the intimate connection between Jackie and her horse. In that moment I let go of the lost years, I released my stale laments; I surrendered her to her horse as I surrendered her for adoption the day she was born. Being with Others has an inverse: Being Without. I looked upon her with an untethered heart. . . (347)

Perhaps it is no accident that the encountering look Haynes recalls is not a look exchanged with the horse, but with her daughter. This is the first time Haynes encounters her daughter in this way, as she explains: “I delivered her, yes. But back then we were not allowed *our* look. One minute she was with me, then I woke up without” (347). Eighteen years later the force of this look is no less profound: “that day reciprocity jumped a childhood trough and pierced me into showing up; *I* was born by Jackie’s look” (348). Echoed here is Kristen Miller’s description of seeing her son as the moment of her own rebirth: “In that very moment, I was transformed, evolved reborn” (qtd in Hedges 13). What Frank and Haynes allow us to see are precisely these looking encounters that are so profoundly touching and

transformative in birth and death and rebirth—in *life*, as such—that, again, a reciprocated look is not necessary.

This maternal encountering look, while certainly not experienced by all, links this gift of being in a metaphysical sense with the (re)emergence of physical being. Barthes looks upon his mother's image after her death and finds the essence of her being in one photograph. From his description, he would have us believe her very being moves through his in this moment of recognition—to be born in the room with him just as he was born from her. . . such are life and death entangled in this look. The maternal body is the origin of embodied being⁵—the creative biological becoming that defines rhetoric in Chapter 2—and, following the trauma of birth, the maternal look is the originary, if idealized, form of Heidegger's giving, "shining into," of being. It is also with this originary, entangled, nonlinear and therefore non-reciprocated look that we can experience something so profoundly haunting in visual media with animals—with whom we are no less materially, biologically entangled (see Chapter 2).

The Unseeing Eye

Hence, the ethical relation to the wholly other necessitates a certain
blindness.

Michelle Ballif "Regarding the Dead" 464

I do not want to see what is shown. I want to see what is secret. What is hidden amongst the visible. I want to see the skin of light.

Hélène Cixous *Stigmata* 184

Barthes's punctum and the very physical trauma it creates, the entanglement of birth and death in the photographic medium itself, offer reason to believe such an emergence as that contained in Heidegger's encountering look can occur in photography and other visual media. And if the encountering look need not be reciprocated to be enabling, as I argue above, if life, as that which encompasses both birth and death in their mutual entanglement, can breathe itself through the "flat Death" of the photograph and grant being to dead and dying eyes, then there is also no need for a reciprocating (animal) eye—whether seeing or unseeing—but perhaps simply the trace of an animal or animal body. And then what is the necessity for or role of the (hum)animal eye in such an encountering look? What is a look, after all? These are the questions explored below and further expanded upon in the following chapter.

One of the biggest issues in arguing for a transformative, self-showing and being-enabling look in the "flatness" of visual media like photography is whether such a look can be *directed*. How can we set the stage, so-to-speak, for such an experience to emerge when its very relation is predicated on a blindness from at least one "side?" Barthes's punctum in photography is sought in images that have already been taken. A punctum arises from intimate entanglement in a photo, yes, but it is also an activity engaged after-the-fact in which one is seized by the

photograph and its documented history—hence the punctum’s incidental and relatively undirected nature. But concerning ourselves with the directed, active practice of creating animals in visual culture requires looking at visual culture and its entanglement from another angle. For this, let us begin again with Watson and Easton’s encountering look as described by Luanne Frank.

Embarking upon the Zodiac and initiating, for Frank, what may constitute an encountering look, a look of Care for the whale, we see Watson and Easton determined to actively create the reality of the whales and whaling fleet that day in 1975. The images that result and their success in garnering media attention created a formula for every radical environmental group to follow. The black and white photo captured by Rex Weyler of Watson and Easton in the Zodiac, headed straight for the Soviet Whaling fleet, has become an iconic image of direct action environmental activism, or what in *Image Politics: The New Rhetoric of Environmental Activism* Kevin Deluca has dubbed an “image event” (Deluca 1). This physical intervention and documentation at a critical threatening event—be it whaling, deforestation, or some other perceived wrong—is tactical, and it is certainly directed, with the aim of entering the public’s eye in what Greenpeace co-founder Robert Hunter calls a “mind bomb”⁶ (Deluca 1). But it does not capture the encountering look, does not get documentation of the whale charging the Zodiac, of the whale pulling back, of the whale’s eye as it begins its descent into the sea. The image the intervention does produce serves a very specific purpose for

environmental change, but it also seems to maintain a sense of objectification.

Morey articulates this well:

Even images that present animals positively still portray them as objects, as animals that need human protection and can never obtain their own agency. While animal activists try to help animals, they only advance their own idea of nature, often a patronizing position of humans as stewards of nature. (42)



Figure 15. Photograph of Watson and Easton on a zodiac confronting the Soviet whaling vessel prior to encountering the male sperm whale. Photograph by Rex Weyler; Web.

The public may be moved and outraged enough by these images of human risk and sacrifice to create positive changes for individual critical issues, but the general, systemic perspective towards animals is largely maintained. This method creates a kind of accounting, one in which activist groups will always be required at the ship's helm, directing public viewers where to look—where to *care*—by deciding for us “which animals get to count” (Morey 35). Animals are, however, still ontologically severed from their human viewers, and their salvation often relies on whether they *look good*—or cute, or regal, or familiar. And we have already seen what making animals cute can do to animals in visual culture (see Chapter 3). Environmental

activism is important work, but it is important work *because of* the representational framework that remains in place.

The reliance on image events in visual culture to instigate a change in perspectives creates problems for creatures like the nearly extinct Lord Howe stick insect, for which no dramatic image event can reasonably be staged. As Robert Krulwich reports for *NPR*, the Melbourne Zoo is attempting its own intervention on behalf of the very large exoskeleton-clad insect in the form of a “public relations campaign,” aimed at Lord Howe residents, “to make these insects more. . . well, adorable, or noble, or whatever it takes.” The video created by the zoo to generate interest or care manages to do exactly what would be expected of a zoo: totally expose and objectify the animal to human viewers in its most vulnerable state. The time-lapse video shows a nymph emerging from its pod-like egg in a brightly lit room. If anything, the video of this birth-hatching makes the insect look all the more alien, as the slow process seems to exaggerate its (already extremely large) size. While the ecologically-inclined may find such a video fascinating, surely anyone with a fear of the creepy-crawlies (in other words the entire presumed target audience for which enormous insects in their backyards might be an issue) would not likely make a connection with the translucent green, squirming body struggling to free all of its six incredibly long legs from a small and dark, pod-like bulge. If animals have to be “attractive” in order to be worthy of conservation and care, we have not come very far: humans remain at the center of life and the universe. The encountering look is something else entirely.

The visual “documentation” of the encountering look fails in Watson and Easton’s case, but one can imagine in the flurry and fear of being charged at by the harpooned male sperm whale, what such a visual might look like from the rhetorical vision⁷ inspired by the men’s accounts. A filming of the event, in the hands of Easton, would likely be jerky and unclear, likely punctuated with sounds of panic from the men and sounds of the crashing ocean waves. In terms of photographic stills, although we may imagine in their retelling a scene that perfectly frames the whale’s eye in close proximity to Watson’s—perhaps even glimpsing in it Watson’s own reflection—any photo would likely be blurred in movement, dark and unclear—certainly not the (com)posed, formal photos Barthes gives us in *Camera Lucida* nor the typical animal photos distributed as memes with animals centrally and clearly observed. That is, these photos would speak with a relative blindness—they would witness without truly grasping the event. Instead, these photos would likely have an aura of a lived experience at the limit of an abyss.

Responding to da Vinci’s *Vierge à l’Enfant*, Picasso’s *Etude pour ‘La Repasseuse’*, and Rembrandt’s *Décollation de Saint Jean Baptiste* in *Stigmata*, Cixous feels with the body the abyssal depths of what is not visible. These drawings offer relatively little *visual* information about what is being made and expressed within—the people created within this medium are not fully “fleshed out,” are largely left to the imagination—yet there is a flurry of movement that nevertheless seems to clearly, or blindly, convey the scenes as well as the physical process and performance of drawing. There is something fleeting that is yet mysteriously

captured in these violent thrashings of drawing—life—“the quick of life” (32): “It’s not a secret of drawing the contours, *but of what escapes the contour*, the secret movement, the breaking, the torment, the unexpected” (30, her emphasis). Rather than being taken-in simply by what is seen, there is a surprising depth of expression in what is not seen. And Cixous contemplates this from the viewpoint of the drawer/writer (that is, creator) in how to accomplish this: “What are we trying to grasp between the lines, in between the strokes, in the net that we’re weaving, that we throw, and the dagger blows?” (30). It is essential to say here, as concerned as this chapter and the previous chapter are with photography, that Cixous is not a fan. In her novel *So Close*, she insists that photography is “the enemy, my enemy exactly, the adversary” (3). Marder, writing on Cixous’s stance on photography in the novel, explains:

Photography, she tells herself, takes too much. Its capacity to ‘take’ is overwhelmingly powerful—excessively powerful—as it seizes hold of everything including even the ‘untakeable’ itself: the very part of ‘life’ that is truly vital and hence ‘untakeable’ precisely and paradoxically because it is all too ‘takeable.’ It imposes its powerful will on life by stripping it of all its movement and precious precariousness. (“Dark” 254)

Echoed here are the concerns of the previous chapter for the animal memes and images that clearly “take too much” and seem to extract a certain vitality from the essence of life. Cixous detests the *grasping* nature of looking in photography. This is all the more reason to attempt to theorize, especially for photography, an

encountering, being-enabling look in visual culture. How can photography gift unto animals the two things that Cixous claims it takes: movement and precariousness? How can we make photography more like the da Vinci, Picasso, and Rembrandt drawings Cixous connects with so deeply?

For starters, the process of writing and drawing as described by Cixous is inescapably enfolded with all the senses: Cixous “tastes” her words for the effect she seeks. Vision has a material body: “You will recognize the true drawing, the live one: it’s still running. Look at the legs” (28); “I submit myself to the invisible truth of my vision, I obey the strange and foreign voice in my body” (29). The dark, haunting scribbles of movement in Picasso’s woman ironing, the broken posture of her body, her tucked head and unseen expression, this drawing,



Figure 16. An early sketch of *The Woman Ironing*. Pablo Picasso; Web.

says Cixous, is “a tragedy” (33). It severely wounds us like the punctum with which Barthes is stricken in photography:

I don’t want to draw the idea, I don’t want to write being, I want what happens in the Woman Ironing, I want the nerve, I want the Revelation of the

broken Woman Ironing. And I want to write *what passes between us* and the Woman Ironing, *the electric current*. The emotion. Because as a result of drawing her with my eyes, I felt: it's *death* that is passing through the Woman Ironing, our mortality in person. I want to draw our mortality, this quiver.

(34, my emphasis and hers)

Expressed here is a becoming, a creation, of life enfolded in dark corners between categories like birth and death. Cixous finds this abyssal enfolding within herself as well, as creator: "We want to write the torment, and we write the joy. At the same time. At each moment I am another myself. The one in and on the other" (36).

This space between the I of the writer and the self in the movement of the hand, in the blind drawing/writing/photographing, allows such hauntings and spectres to appear, alerting us to the otherwise invisible complexities of ontological, epistemological, ethical entanglement of self/other, living/dead, human/animal. Diane Davis refers to this self-haunting in "Autozoography": "The I is generated, each time, in the gap between me and myself, between the one recognizing and the one recognized, where an extrahuman rhetorical relation plays out" (537). This abyssal space, like the whale fall, is one that we cannot visually arrest. Rather, I am following my own (animal) tracks when attempting to locate myself in time, and, "At the level of these (undead) traces, an irreducible but never simply innate rhetoricity is responsible for the perpetual (re)animation of the life of the living, for 'my' life, the experience of which can only be both spectral and bereaved" (548).

Michelle Ballif, whom I quote briefly above, similarly argues for the preoriginary rhetorical address between the living and dead: “and that mourning, the impossible work of mourning, haunts the possibility of the address, constituting the ethical relation between the self and the other, the otherness of the self, and the otherness of the other” (456). This preoriginary rhetorical regard of the dead other also challenges the limit between the visible/invisible with the look from the specter. Ballif explains this spectral look as “the primordial ethical relation: we do not see who looks at us, but we respond to the look. . . Hence, the ethical relation to the wholly other necessitates a certain *blindness*” (464, her emphasis). Looking then, says Derrida, is done with a “haptic eye,” or an eye that touches—that “press[es] together like lips” (qtd in Ballif 465). The move away from a methodology of reflection to that of diffraction is echoed in the haptic eye, as well. Looking then, as is conveyed by Cixous, is irreducible from our embodied sensory experiences. Looking is touching, feeling with the skin—the body. As in the brittlestar species discussed in Chapter 1, vision is at once an activity of the body. Eleanor Morgan echoes this in “Connecting with Animals” when she describes the experience of seeing a female “dreamer fish,” *Oneirodes acanthias*, preserved in a jar. This particular species typically lives at depths unseen by humans and impenetrable by sunlight, so it is not exactly attractive by our standards: “Visually. . . the dreamer fish is very unappetizing; it has large sharp teeth, black wrinkled skin, and a thin lure coming out of its head. *I would not want it in my mouth*” (175, my emphasis). Morgan

suggests a scientific-artistic way of “connecting” with animals that we will return to in the following chapter.

As a preoriginary ethical address, according to Ballif, looking hinges upon the touch of the invisible specter—on blindness: the dying, falling whale; the deceased mother; the dreamer fish. Barthes’s punctum and Cixous’s stigmata realize this touch with the physical trauma ignited by select images: images that entangle us in their movement and creation. These are, according to Cixous, “forms of art that lacerate the eyelids” (*Stigmata* xi). She further elaborates: “Each Stigmatext is the portrait of a story attacked from all sides, that attacks itself and in the end gets away” (xvi). And its traces are our wounds to bear—excavating our flesh and uncovering pathways all the way down to the dead and dying, the depths of the invisible crypts of the self-as-other and human-as-animal within. This role of the gravedigger is that to which the following chapter returns.

CHAPTER FIVE

DEEPENING



Figure 17. Photograph of Catherine Chalmer's "Gas Chamber" from her series *American Cockroach*. Web.

This project is about distances between. You and me. Human and animal. Life and death. Right now I am folding that distance (it has a skin). Folding, tucking, creating darkness, creating a feeling-with of darkness and flesh. Who are you? I wonder where you might be while reading these black words currently spilling over my fingers. They stumble. (I am a slow writer. I have to feel each one, roll it around in my mouth, taste it before letting go). I wonder if the words linger as they entangle us in their folds. Perhaps they seem like dead weights on a page, and if this page were to manifest itself as paper—woven of tree flesh—they would keep it from taking flight and seeking chaos. I imagine paper leaves scraping dry against a glittering pavement, scuttling like crabs for the ocean, seeking to bury themselves in its womb and shed their words. In the water they would turn again to soft flesh and bleed words into the ocean. I am waiting for a tide to take them under with the whales.

There are two ways of clambering downward—by plunging into the earth and going deep into the sea—and neither is easy.

Hélène Cixous *Three Steps on the Ladder of Writing* 5

In *Three Steps on the Ladder of Writing*, Cixous takes us to the school of writing—to three schools of writing, to be exact—which is approached by descending (or rather, by an “*ascent* downward” to indicate its difficulty)¹. This ladder begins with the drawing of an “H”: “This is what writing is: I one language, I another language, and between the two, the line that makes them vibrate; writing forms a passageway between two shores” (3). A pedagogical approach to a HumAnimal rhetorics entails a vibration between these two selves, or shores, as well: between a human “I” and an animal “I.” How do we make them vibrate? How do we reveal their humanimal folds? It is not a journey in which we can go, straightaway, from one side to the other. There is no bridge. Rather, as seen in the previous chapter and as suggested by Cixous, it requires exploring the enfolding depths of dark contours.

The pedagogical HumAnimal rhetorics theorized here requires a two-part, or double, movement, the first part of which concerns the humanimal. Sketching the humanimal requires a new way of approaching autobiography, perhaps with an understanding of what Diane Davis explains in “Autozoography”: “The presumption of self-knowledge is not an innate quality of ‘the human’ but the already relational condition for any living being that must repeat itself to be itself” (533). That is, the “I” that allows us the supposed unique ability of representing the self *to the self*,

which is “generated, each time, in the gap between me and myself, between the one recognizing and the one recognized” (536-537), must be examined—the skin of this “gap” folded and felt for evidence of its “extrahuman relationality”—through novel autobiographical forms (537). Who are we, as humanimals? What, in each of us, haunts the very idea of an “I” to which we presume to point and speak? Such fault lines dividing the self release spectres, and these spectres are the focus of an autobiography that descends into the earth’s organic matter in search of what lies buried within.

The second movement of a pedagogical HumAnimal rhetorics is concerned with animals in visual media as theorized in the previous chapter. This movement seeks to extend an encountering look that entangles as it enfolds, offering being to animals by breathing life into the flat materiality of photography. These animal visuals created fail to grasp animals as objects, but instead allow them movement, darkness, and escape. This movement of a HumAnimal rhetorics descends with the whale fall into a vast sea of being.

Both movements of a HumAnimal rhetorics are achieved by an entanglement with the senses of bodies and with the dynamic interplay of materiality more generally as sensation, which, according to Grosz, “contracts the vibratory waves of matter” through art and artistic invention (*Chaos* 62). Art, and specifically photography for this project, “synthesizes and compresses the materiality that composes it, transmitting the force of materiality, its vibratory resonance, from a

work to a body” (62). Artistic media are unique in their ability to bring the “vibratory waves of matter” into contact with the body:

Sensation is the zone of indeterminacy between subject and object, the bloc that erupts from the encounter of the one with the other. Sensation impacts the body, not through the brain, not through representations, signs, images, or fantasies, but directly, on the body’s own internal forces, on cells, organs, the nervous system. (73)

These artistic media that erupt as sensation within the body itself, and in which an encountering look can be extended, are the entangled passageways of a HumAnimal rhetorics seeking a lived experience at the edge of an abyss. To approach this kind of revelatory experience, we will begin by deepening—first into the earth as gravediggers and then into the sea.

Earth

The edge of the jungle is not the place where the line shifts the most. That is deeper in where the caves are, pink with bones.

Bhanu Kapil *Humanimal* 62

... what was I afraid of? Being imund? With what? Being imund with joy.

Clarice Lispector *The Passion According to G.H.* 65

In *Three Steps on the Ladder of Writing*, Cixous describes the third step or moment in an apprenticeship of writing, which is “the most advanced, the highest, the deepest” (7):

Writing . . . does not come from outside. On the contrary, it comes from deep inside. . . . It is deep in my body, further down, behind thought. . . .

Somewhere in my stomach, my womb, and if you have not got a womb—then it is somewhere “else.” You must climb down in order to go in the direction of that place. (118)

This is the “School of Roots” (7). As the “most advanced,” it follows the school of death, the first moment of her writing apprenticeship, which teaches us that “writing is learning to die . . . learning not to be afraid, in other words to live at the extremity of life, which is what the dead, death, give us” (10). We learn how to die in writing, and then, before dying, we descend with great effort towards the roots, our vegetal stage, toward the elements that promise to decompose our tissues and make us detritus. Cixous suggests: “Perhaps flowers are our last human stage” (Cixous *Three* 151). Roots reach down below what we have fashioned as a level, grounded floor. These grounds of existence upon which we stand tall, walk forward, build upon, are also the grounds upon which we fall. Here is where the dust collects, where the bugs and pests crawl, where the fissures begin. Our grounds are marked by dirt from our own travels as we pass and by the unclean fluids created by our own living bodies, which—upon escaping—remind us of our vulnerable materiality. We busy ourselves cleaning these floors: erasing their presence, and in doing so,

erasing ourselves. We sweep the seams between order and disorder, between the life and death that these fluids surely threaten—between “I” human and “I” animal. As a solid plane the floor is the site of the uncanny; like photographs, whose flatness betrays the life they catch and contain. Being level with that ground, or burrowing into it, alters one’s perception of the world.

As children, are we not so much closer to the earth? I remember being fascinated by grasshoppers in my front yard. I would sit in the grass and feel the soft blades against my skin, tracing each separate blade to its tip, examining each side (I can still feel the texture of Midwestern grass haunting my fingers). I would lie in this nest of earth, looking into the infinite sky until my mom inevitably called out in warning of the “chiggers” below. What are these mysterious animals that live in the ground, threatening to bury themselves in my skin? Now I am a mother, and now I stand upright. I call out to my children, dirt under their nails (so much dirt! from where?): “look out for fire ants!” But always they desire to be close to the ground, crawling along its surface, learning its contours, feeling its life.

In *Volatile Bodies*, Grosz explains the “danger” posed by our leaking bodily fluids: “they flow, they seep, they infiltrate. . . they force megalomaniacal aspirations to earth, refusing consciousness its supremacy” (194). Grosz turns to Kristeva’s *Powers of Horror* in which the clean and proper “I” is achieved by expelling and denying these fluids that become abject, threatening death and defilement:

These body fluids, this defilement, this shit are what life withstands, hardly and with difficulty, on the part of death. There, I am at the border of my

condition as a living being. My body extricates itself, as being alive, from that border. Such wastes drop so that I might live, until, from loss to loss, nothing remains in me and my entire body falls beyond the limit—*cadere*, cadaver.

(Kristeva 3)

Falling on the solid plane of our architectural frames, these fluids are at once a liability. But when these fluids spill on the earth, they are absorbed, and perhaps it is here—towards the roots—that we should follow. To get to the unclean roots, to reach for their poetry, we must follow death.

These are the things my hands and eyes remember: She was born on the floor of our neighbor's closet in a pink, fleshy membrane. Her mother ripped the membrane open delicately with her teeth and licked her all over, her whole body moving with each rough pass. A gentle, violent love. She became enfolded in our world—this very personal world called home, called family, which we construct with walls and doors and rooms and routines. She became Meadow. One October twelve years later, I was on the floor with her again, this time with her black vomit and blood. Saliva in my hair. She died on the floor. The vet injected pink fluid into her vein, and she drifted away in my arms. All I could say was, "I'm so sorry." They returned her ashes to me in a wooden box engraved with flowers.

Cixous talks of "*the element*," quoting Marina Tsvetaeva's Russian "*stikhia*," which translates as "both the element—matter—and the element—poetic verse" (Cixous 5, her emphasis). Cixous says, "*the element resists*," which is what makes the reaching for this humanimal truth so difficult (5, her emphasis). The earth, the

verse, *resists*. But we must dig; we are gravediggers. Perhaps the flat planes of our houses and buildings, these containers for “culture,” are what need to be excavated in seeking novel autobiographical form for the humanimal.

Cixous turns to Clarice Lispector’s *The Passion According to G.H.* as an example of writing into death, of digging and reaching for the roots where death takes us, and thus embracing “our own marshes, our own mud” (119). Lispector’s G.H., “a woman reduced to her initials,” contemplates a dying *barata* (Portuguese for “cockroach”) she has shut in a door (Cixous 114). The *barata* is unclean, or *imund*. It is not of the “so-called clean” *mundus*; it is not of the clean world (117). A thick white discharge is expelled from the *barata*, threatening its borders and threatening G.H.’s own identity. This contemplation of the *barata*, with its overflowing life (and impending death), becomes the opportunity for “a type of fantastic, total, emotional, spiritual, and intellectual revolution, which, in short, is a crime” (112). The cockroach threatens to take us to the roots, to the deepest point of writing “where those who are excluded live” (116). Catherine Chalmers probes similar depths of the humanimal via the cockroach in her artwork, imagining “that early *Homo sapiens* living in caves probably did not find the cockroach as abominable as we do now . . . our hatred of the roach has perhaps grown in proportion to the boundaries we have erected between ourselves and the natural world” (Chalmers). (Chalmers discusses the cockroach at length, and I will turn to her artwork below). Lispector’s G.H. goes into such a cave when she *really sees* the cockroach she has attempted to kill: “what I was seeing with an embarrassment so painful and so frightened and so innocent,

what I was seeing was life looking back at me. . . . I'd looked at the living roach and was discovering inside it the identity of my deepest life" (Lispector 51-52). By embracing "the best part of ourselves that is called imund," we may attain a similar seeing and revolution of the "I" (Cixous 118). This process of seeing the roach, of seeing the fissures between "I" human and "I" animal and the deep life that resonates and haunts these two selves, is a process of becoming imund—an imund that is *humanimal*—with joy.

One year after Meadow's death, it was October again and I was nauseous and far enough along to have seen and heard a little heartbeat. We planned, afraid and excited, but two weeks later an empty white circle was all that remained on the ultrasound screen. For days I walked around as this cradle-crypt. On a blank sheet of paper, I wrote "I am a haunting." Then I was on the floor again, but this time the blood was mine. On the floor, looking again into eyes black with death, cradling a body in my hands.

Roots do not simply go down and stop. They spread out, reaching for others, forming a complex, organic lace of filaments. Perhaps our feeling-with, which begins underground and before birth, when we are enfolded in the earth of our mother's shared materiality, forms a similar kind of organic, interlacing web of images that can transport us back to our imund, this most primary of relations. Bhanu Kapil's *Humanimal: A Project for Future Children* is an excellent example of the type of organic web of autobiography, choragraphy, and field work a HumAnimal pedagogy seeks, for it is imund with joy. Kapil asks, "What are your primal images?" (59)

Presumably these primal images can be known, for they ignite in us a familiar sensation—a sensation, perhaps, without words. Kapil’s lyrical writing interlaced with the brief “snapshots” of her life, the poetic voice she gives the “wolfgirls”—conjuring a humanimal haunting—linger with the body as such images do: “I substitute images for events, my humanimal prerogative” (25).

As I describe in Chapter 2, Kapil’s book traces the historical events of two girls, Kamala and Amala, who were found living amongst wolves in Bengal, India. The girls were rescued by an Indian missionary who then brought them to his orphanage. Fragments of Kapil’s own story entangle with a poetic “blue sky fiction” and the “source text” of the missionary’s diary, creating vibrations between human and animal that wound the reader (1, ix). These vibrations are particularly palpable in the haunting fictional embodiment of the girls, torn as they were between these two shores:

I want to stand up but I can’t do that here. They would know I am a wolf by my sore hips, the look in my eyes. At the edge of the garden was a line of blue chalk. My mother was crouching there, waiting for me in her dark coat. In the dream, I walk towards her and she stands up. She opens up her coat like two wings and I step into her cloth heart, her cleft of matted fur.

(11)

With nets and sheets, they made a canopy over my body, and I curled up inside the air. With teeth and earth, they made a net around my body, and I curled up inside my hair. (31)

In conjuring these voices, Kapil attains what Cixous describes in *Stigmata* as an “electric current,” a “quiver” of death and mortality in writing (34). Kapil describes her text as “A matrix of fluid digits. Images of children in the under-world. An alphabet to O, a kind of mouth” (7). *Humanimal* is a matrix, a womb, in which the girls’ spectres are invited to haunt us. This haunting proceeds in lettered sections of the text that stop at “O.” In fact, “O” is repeated three times, the first of which has no companion text. The haunting voices have disappeared, as if the wolfgirls have died in a human alphabet all over again. Kapil’s own voice breaks through into the two “O” entries that follow, where a girl attempts to emerge from the jungle but remains “fused forever with the trees of the perimeter” (58). Between this entry and the last entry for “O,” Kapil runs across beginnings and endings of her *Humanimal* journey, which has become a story of interwoven fictional, historical, and autobiographical threads: she finds the missionary’s diary in a library; the newborn girls are left at the jungle’s perimeter in the roots of a tree; Kapil visits caves in search of humanimal faces; and, the final “O” entry: “I’ve exhausted the alphabet. But I’m not writing this for you” (63). Kapil’s book wounds her to write it, and we feel this trauma while reading. “I wanted to write until they were real,” she says, “When they began to breathe, opening their mouths in the space next to writing, I stopped writing” (41). This humanimal haunting arises by digging, by following death, by following the imund that leads to death’s roots, which then spread out in interlacing filaments of flourishing life.

I was a womb again, carrying the enfolding unknown. Each day, each moment, I saw an infinite death spread out before me. Mourning that death, with no beginning or end, was my constant impossibility. There is no joy in the “if” that replaces the “when.” There is no writing, either.

The last two entries of *Humanimal*, numbered “59.ii” and “60,” go to the roots: “This is revision, a re-telling of planar space. In the enchanted forest, a finger strokes the forearm of the reader reading of a tree in flower. He opens the flower to see a human eye” (64). Cixous describes this root or flower stage as emerging “at the moment of dying”:

These flowers are not signs of death, they are alive. In these moments of extremity, perhaps we do admit to having a relationship with the vegetal, which is as intense, as embodied, as fleshly. . . . Perhaps it is because we discover at this point that flowers lead . . . by way of getting through the earth, with their roots, to the core of the matter. They lead where we are going: we need them as guides. (154)

A pedagogical HumAnimal rhetorics is imund with joy like Lispector’s G.H. and Kapil’s *Humanimal*, and as such, strives for “reintegrating the earthly, the earth, and the earth’s composition in one’s body, imagination, and thought” (Cixous 150). This kind of imund writing “drops the self, the speculating self, the speculating clever ‘I’” and instead follows the body “with the hand running . . . the hand leads to the flowers” (156).

In October of 2015, two years after Meadow's death and exactly one year and one day after I was on the floor with a second small death in my hands, I gave birth to a healthy baby girl. We named her Iris Meadow.

Digging



Figure 18. Portrait from photographer Catherine Just's series *Chasing the Fog. Web.*

The *I am* is given its time in which to reflect on the past and to anticipate its future: the exposure time does no violence to the time of the *I am*: on the

contrary, one has the strange impression that the exposure time *is* the lifetime.

John Berger *About Looking* 51

Were my snapshots the only things that photographed an abyss?

Clarice Lispector *The Passion According to G.H.* 18

Perhaps it is time to consider how a pedagogical HumAnimal rhetorics may be applied with what I have referred to as novel autobiographical forms. Given the theoretical focus on making the distance between shores of the Human and the Animal vibrate with artistic media, projects created for coursework should reach for the same. Students are encouraged to become gravediggers, seeking to uncover interstices and fault lines in their own lives, whether between human and animal, life and death, male and female, truth and falsity, or other planar shores that loom heavy in culture and deny the foliated nature of our intra-actions. Going to Cixous's school of roots unleashes spectres, gives these spectres voice, and challenges "proper," established identities while illustrating our material entanglements with the world.

Given a HumAnimal rhetoric's focus on the entanglement of materiality, student projects are best performed across a range of media. Depending upon a given student's process of discovery, these autobiographical projects could take a variety of forms; they may include compositions that incorporate "objects" of everyday life similar to examples given in Jody Shipka's *Toward a Composition Made*

Whole, which emphasizes composition's "complex, ongoing processes that are shaped by, and provide shape for, living" (17). I would further argue that such compositions arise from rhetorical entanglements that provide shape for *life itself*, which—while composed within one *biological* medium—has many expressions. Such projects are attempts at tracing this very complex, interwoven becoming of natureculture, bodymind, and humanimal, the resulting artifacts of which exhibit a condensation of this fluid process.

Gregory Ulmer's electracy provides an exceptionally useful methodology for a HumAnimal pedagogy, particularly given his emphasis on images, autobiography, and heuretics as "a mode of research and teaching" inspired by avant-garde artists ("The Heuretics" 103). All of these pedagogical elements are important to Ulmer's unique methodologies (and to a pedagogical HumAnimal rhetorics as well), but heuretics is especially crucial to how all projects and materials are enacted. Ulmer describes heuretics as "an alternative to . . . hermeneutics and critique" that "is synonymous with thinking as discovery rather than as interpretation" (106). What is more, heuretics works by "creat[ing] gaps, gaps in understanding" while also "provid[ing] some tools, devices, a rhetoric as guides for filling those gaps" (107). Therefore, heuretics lends itself well to exploring abyssal divides like human and animal and inventing ways of complicating these distances, as by folding and entanglement in HumAnimal rhetorics. The tools for exploring (and filling) these gaps rely upon personal exploration and invention, which Ulmer illustrates when explaining his reaction to a sculpture by Martin Kippenberger:

The gap that works for me is the one between the cardboard box and its name or namesake, *Rameau's Nephew*. I think at once of Diderot, of his hybrid essay/fiction the title borrowed by Kippenberger, and experience *a pleasure of recognition*. Nothing is communicated to me, no message in any case, but *I am oriented in a certain direction*. (110, my emphasis)

The process of discovering the “gap that works” for each student and then filling this gap proceeds by Ulmer’s logic of invention, conduction, which operates much like Freud’s “dream work” (110). Seemingly random connections can be followed and previously abandoned trajectories revisited in something like a purposeful wandering of meaning-making. As such, one similarly wanders away from precise, absolute, proper ways of knowing. What is created in this gap resembles myth—an allegory of the self (107).

Conduction is also the logic working within Ulmer’s mystory genre, which seeks an “inmixing of autobiographical and theoretical speculations” (“Teletheory” 51). Invention becomes autobiographical by a “living description of [...] writing” (51). Ulmer quotes Derrida’s “Coming into One’s Own,” to illustrate this peculiar process: “It’s not, strictly speaking, a matter of superposition, nor of parallelism, nor of analogy, nor of coincidence. The necessity that links the two descriptions is of a different sort: we shall not find it easy to give a name to it” (51). Derrida’s description very closely resembles Barad’s entanglement or methodology of diffraction, diffraction again being the “differences that make a difference” (72). At the very least, we are here again seeing an intervention of the otherwise presumed

objective scientist or writer who is thought of, particularly in Western philosophy and science, as separate from his or her object of study. Suddenly the scientist/theorist/writer is inescapably entangled. Mystory is essentially this entanglement of oneself with knowledge—a threading-through of autobiographical content toward further production of meaning. In terms of a HumAnimal rhetorics, this autobiographical element of wandering through and entangling with knowledge—questioning the “whole topography of the *autos*, the self”—is especially productive (Derrida “Coming” 135). When this is paired with images, as in Ulmer’s “Choramancy: A User’s Guide,” for example, recognition of punctums becomes a way for seeking the foliated structure of the “I.”

Like Ulmer’s choramancy, the autobiographical features of a HumAnimal pedagogy incorporate seemingly disparate fragments that resonate when entangled in material-discursive inventions. Ulmer does this with the Florida Research Ensemble by seeking a repeating punctum in photographs taken around a problematic area of Miami. This particular project takes a local issue as its point of departure for heuretical consultation. A similar project, perhaps more attuned to HumAnimal rhetorics, may take as its departure any number of conceptual fault lines that leave two shores in need of entanglement. Abyssal frontiers can be uncovered heuretically—with images as well as writing—by following death, by seeking recognition of wounds, or by following the “tug” of a humanimal tail. What unexpectedly wounds us and why? These are the wounds from which dormant spectres arise and patterns become apparent, whether we seek punctums in images

or words. Kapil does something similar in *Humanimal* by entangling herself in the pursuit of a documentary:

Of the sixteen children who were born, only seven—six boys and a girl—survived into childhood proper. One of the boys pushed the girl off the roof and then there were six. My father was the second oldest, and though I am not sure if the image—my aunt Subudhra falling upside down to her death, a kite’s slim rope still bound to her wrist and wrapped twice around her knuckles—is relevant to the story I am telling, it accompanies it. In the quick, black take of a body’s flight, a body’s eviction or sudden loss of place, the memory of descent functions as a subliminal flash. (30)

The book trembles with this unexpected interweaving of Kapil’s family tragedies and the lyrical, haunting voices given to the wolfgirls. Upon discovering the depths of the girls’ story and the way it affects her, Kapil creates something *more than* a documentary. She creates something with flesh that wounds us and is wounded in return. The project resonates, vibrates with humanimal intensities, when she enters this poetic space.

Kapil writes in fragments, alternating voice and perspective. Cixous describes how three of her favorite writers—Jean Genet, Kafka, and Lispector—all wrote on scraps of paper as they were dying: “There is a ‘style’ of dying in which we find something economical, extremely dense, compact, urgent, and, at the same time, very tender” (*Three* 153). At one point in his life, “economic need” forced Walter Benjamin to write on “reverse sides of letters sent to him, postcards or an invitation

to review, library forms, travel tickets, proofs, an advertisement for 'S. Pelligrino,' prescription pads," leaving behind "a wealth of compressed sheets, notes, scraps, on which his great work unfolds richly detailed" (Marx et al. 31). Whereas Cixous talks of writing on scraps as an indication of death, Roland Barthes writes in fragments for the pleasure of "beginnings." In his autobiography *Roland Barthes*, which he narrates in the third person—outside of himself (a fragmented self)—Barthes writes: "Liking to find, to write *beginnings*, he tends to multiply this pleasure: that is why he writes in fragments" (94, his emphasis). Barthes discusses this fragmented nature of his autobiography directly: "To write by fragments: the fragments are then so many stones on the perimeter of a circle: I spread myself around: my whole little universe in crumbs; at the center, what?" (92-93). Scraps and fragments of writing seem to populate the act of dying, the desire for beginnings, and the impoverished who have few resources. They also fulfill the need for movement, for incompleteness. The fragmentary nature of these scraps of thoughts also makes them more likely to be mistaken as refuse, as something left-over, expelled, unclean (or perhaps they *are* these things). They must be gathered, attended to, and cherished by someone who realizes their value. This writing from the extremities of life, from its roots "where those who are excluded live," is also a HumAnimal writing, for it is a writing that is entangled in the lived reality of the world (Cixous *Three* 116). Scraps and fragments destabilize wholeness, delivering themselves more readily to the decomposing earth or to scattering like petals blown out to sea.

The fragmentary nature of writing is abundant in contemporary times as well, with texting, tweets, Facebook statuses, snapchat messages, and even image-based sharing like the six-second looping videos on Vine and photo sharing on apps like Instagram. Given that selfies are condensations of a kind of naïve visual autobiography (we have already seen how damaging such naivety can be in Chapter 3), we will turn toward these visages on our final descent.

As Jill Walker Rettberg explains in her recent book *Seeing Ourselves Through Technology: How We Use Selfies, Blogs, and Wearable Devices to See and Shape Ourselves*, self-portraits in the photographic medium are not in any way new. In the early 1900s, photographers like Kate Matthew and Ilse Bing took self-portraits with cameras that were often too expensive or otherwise encumbering for most people, so these types of photo self-portraits were not common. From there, self-portraiture in photography became increasingly experimental. As one example of this experimentation, Rettberg cites Eleanor Antin's *Carving: A Traditional Sculpture* from 1972, which is displayed in linear fragments, depicting the author's gradual weight-loss over a period of 37 days (8). Mark C. Taylor also discusses self-portraits in *The Moment of Complexity*, looking specifically at artist Chuck Close's work. While known for his photo-realistic paintings, Close also creates self-portraits of striking complexity by constructing them from grids of individual painting fragments. Taylor describes these works as "no longer static images" but rather "dynamic interactive processes" (134). Although Close is a painter, his artworks are an important example of how truly dynamic and interactive the materiality of art can be. Indeed,

looking at Close's *Self-Portrait* from 1997, a multispecies or superorganism of interrelated parts is what first comes to mind rather than an individual's face.

In an online course called "Self-Portraiture as Medicine," professional photographer Catherine Just begins by asking her students to consider the difference between a "selfie" and a self-portrait. Most selfies look remarkably similar; they do not tend to explore any kind of dynamic relationality or any complication of the "self" being depicted. And, taken together across an Instagram gallery or some other social media platform, they seem to maintain this type of static, flat demonstration of the "I." Self-portraiture, on the other hand, explores and complicates the self through a variety of ways. The "I" in "I am" is not taken as a given, but rather is fractured and fragmented using different photographic effects. In terms of Just's own self-portraiture, she describes it primarily as a process of discovery:

I let myself take pictures that don't work until I take the pictures that do work, and I love the process. . . . It's really a dance between my camera, myself and this other energy that, when I'm not controlling so much, uh, allows that energy to come in and have some sort of say. It's like alchemy . . . letting the unknown or the unexpected to occur. . . . and I let it become its own thing and it's like a dance, it becomes this living, breathing process.

(Just)

Just's haunting, ghost-like images are created when she digs "into the underworld, into the emotion," seeking this dirt and depth and movement (Just). Movement is

prevalent in much of her work; she describes its significance as “explor[ing] the space in between the words” (Just). The emotion in her self-portraits is palpable, perhaps even more so than the photos Barthes offers in *Camera Lucida*². But the point of creating these self-portraits is not to stir a reaction or emotion in others, at least not in this photography course. Just’s course is designed with an outcome of moving toward healing. The specific reasons *why* someone in this course would need healing are not disclosed, but it is taken as a given that every “student” is working through something that has do with a fractured “I.” In performing this alchemical process of self-portraiture through Just’s daily prompts, these students seem to be filling or folding this fractured space in themselves (much like the dream



Figure 19. Self-portrait from photographer Catherine Just's series *Chasing the Fog*. Web.

work of Ulmer’s conduction). The portraits do not create *answers* so much as they conjure ghosts.

I too enrolled in Just's course as a kind of performative undertaking for research. Barad emphasizes performative enactments of entanglement, so this was my motivation. While Just seems to explain a process that is somewhat loose and free or freeing, the assignment prompts were quite structural and seemed to imply an easy translation between words and images. The first day's assignment read as follows:

Please write out a list of words that correlate with a relationship you're currently in. Adjectives that describe it. Words that help define it. Emotions, etc. . . . What would those words look like visually? What would your feelings around this relationship look and feel like? Explore this today. (Just)

What Just seems to be prescribing as part of this "medicine" is to designate props in an attempt to capture an emotion in these images and control the "creative process." To me, these instructions come across as more structural than what I am typically comfortable with. But, it was a performative undertaking, so I did it. What I did not expect in following these seemingly prosaic directions was to be transformed in any way, but—to my astonishment—a cascade of emotions and energy arose as I created and edited these images. The relationships I chose to explore in response to Just's prompt—that of mother, student, and academic—emerged in a vivid way. When I looked upon the my-self that emerged in these portraits, I saw all of those relationships and none of them. They were there, like Chuck Close's miniature grid-like paintings, but what arose in their dynamic interplay was a woman I both recognized and never knew. I cried. This was, for me, an emergence of complexity I

had not expected. Just is right: it is like alchemy. The photograph created a wound, a vibration, that made me reconsider my own topos of self.

Given the predominance of selfies circulating on social media, I see a “selfie vs. self-portrait” assignment especially appropriate for a course in HumAnimal rhetorics that seeks to question our ability to stand back and point at a human self. The medium in which this is attempted also “meets students where they are” in the kind of technologies they are comfortable with, thus giving these technologies and social media sites an increased importance. Rather than composing selfie after selfie, each of which looks identical to the next, this process of filling or folding the gaps that inevitably fracture the “I” to which we point makes these technologies resonate with new meaning; they become a pathway through which we seek an emergence and vibration, a sudden moment when we see the quiver of life. The grid of images on Instagram, for example, can ignite this more complex sensation of looking.

In following the hand to the roots or flowers, as Cixous advocates, rather than back to the human self, we seek a strange pedagogy of the humanimal that is imund with joy. It is out of the clean and orderly world. It is a haunting of the “I” we presume to know. Given these roots, further assignments and projects will surely burgeon forth in a more complete and complex flowering. For now, let us turn from our terrestrial roots to the “briny womb of the sea” that, too, is enfolded within us all (Schilthuizen 19).

Sea



Figure 20. Sketch and watercolor of fin, Sei, and humpback whales done by Illustrator Chris Wallbank during a marine mammal survey in the Barents Sea. 1 Jul 2014; Web.

Yet it may be possible to begin to use photographs according to a practice addressed to an alternative future.

John Berger *About Looking* 60

The whale's eye—midnight, mid-ocean—had no eyelashes and, according to another wildlife officer, no tear ducts (for what would be the point of crying in the sea?).

Rebecca Giggs "Whale Fall"

In “Writing Offshore: The Disappearing Coastline of Composition,” Cynthia Haynes characterizes composition pedagogy as having “kept too close to the shoreline, dragging the anchor of *argumentative writing* (a.k.a. critical thinking) until it took hold on the bedrock curricula of grammar and style, aims and modes, claims, grounds, and warrants,” and in doing so, “has run *aground* like some leviathan, a beached whale that inexplicably (and paradoxically) crawls onto the shore” (668). Haynes advocates for a pushing off from solid ground to abstraction, to detaching from the “why” that is insufficient for facing the pervasive violence and tragedies that defy reason. Indeed, she is *haunted* in their wake and in the inability to respond with argument, with reason, to these tragedies (669). In response to this “will to strand” of composition pedagogy, Haynes pushes off from this shore “that compels us to teach *good writing* as the invention of *good reasons*,” seeking instead “an idea that will bear us (by indirection) toward non-sovereign outposts along transitory migration routes” (670). With this pedagogy of writing offshore, we can imagine “composition theory . . . as lashed to the hull of an itinerant *aporia*—Ahab at the helm, bearings lost, the image of Keats’ [*sic*] epitaph, ‘Here lies one whose name was writ on water’” (670-671).

A HumAnimal rhetorics similarly seeks to abandon this shoreline and the “will to strand,” (Haynes “Writing” 668) for Rebecca Giggs has already given a vivid image of such a terrible fate:

In the morning a part of the whale that ought not be outside of it was outside of it. A digestive organ, frilled and pale in the foam. The whale’s billiard-ball

eyes tumbled in its head and its breathing sounded labored. The sharks slid into vapor, a squinting rumour. No blood on the tideline. People stayed back from the water nonetheless. . . . Seagulls flew down to peck avian hieroglyphs in the whale's back. At every nip it flinched, still intensely alive and tormented. (Giggs)

Indeed, "we need the sea" (Haynes "Writing" 674). And even more so, we need the entanglement of the whale fall.

To proceed into these watery depths with a pedagogy of images, particularly images of animals in our case, is to leave this shoreline for "the fringes" of rhetorical pedagogy, of which Ulmer is also a part. This writing of the whale fall in visual culture is simultaneously a writing of our own hypersea (see Chapter 2); in these waters rhetorical life is enfolded. "We are all boat people," and we are also sea creatures entangled in these uncanny depths with their mysterious ontological origins (Haynes "Writing" 697). Let us attempt to write this wounding of the whale fall.

To invent an image that offers an encountering look to the unseeing animals within means to write a haunting. Perhaps the beginning of offering animals an encountering look in visual media is to acknowledge their (individual) deaths in the first place. In "Indexical Humans, Iconic Animals," Stacy Rule discusses animal death in film, arguing that animals are typically visually depicted as iconic, referring to a vague group of similar animals, rather than indexical or particular. Rule suggests narration and editing as techniques for revealing these individual deaths in film. For

example, narration of a documentary film on seal clubbing would create a more indexical animal if each seal were referred to as an individual: “*This* is a very young seal. *This* seal is probably only two or three weeks of age” (Rule 547, her emphasis). The use of such pronouns illuminates each animal as an individual capable of death. However successful such an approach may be (and Rule is herself skeptical), it is trapped within the representationalist framework for looking and grasping, hence the need for a narrator to identify and direct from the ship’s helm: *this* is who counts, *this* is where to care. These “demonstrative pronouns” for identifying indexes may differentiate animals from one another, illuminating each death, but they also maintain the abyssal divide between human and animal.

Returning again to Catherine Chalmers, we are faced with animal death of the decidedly un-cute kind in her *American Cockroach* video series. In her video “Burned at the Stake,” a cockroach is displayed up close so that we see her face (as G.H. saw the face of her barata). In the beginning of the video, the roach is simply there, facing us, twiddling her little legs. But then we see the leg movements speed up as if suddenly frantic; a dark smoke rises. The black curling smoke rises while we are still face-to-face with this frantic roach. The camera pans out to show flames licking the cockroach’s body, eventually lighting it on fire. While this animated death features an animal that (for many) embodies everything detestable about the nonhuman and unclean, what is striking is the discomfort and sympathy (and anger) at witnessing her death:

We have difficulty looking something in the eye as it dies—even if we really want it dead. . . . Humans are incredibly efficient killers, yet remarkably queasy at facing or acknowledging what we do. For us, there is a disjuncture between mass, anonymous, silent deaths, and those that have been individualized. We do not feel the same emotion and responsibility for what we do not witness, whether it is behind-the-wall pesticide death, or the graver problem of wildlife loss from habitat destruction.

Thankfully, Chalmers explains how she animated the filmed torture with “already-dead bugs.” Indeed, it is clear in reading her artist’s interview on the project just how unlikely an actual death would be at her hands. Chalmers loves these cockroaches, and her artwork provides a compelling complication of our clean borders (and floors). Our clean deaths. Perhaps the video has a similar effect as the transformative experience in Lispector’s novel when G.H. is riveted by the roach’s face and body, its *truth* in the unclean—poised in that liminal space between life and death.

Dead and dying animal bodies seem to orient us toward a shared material finitude. What does it matter whether one is capable of being-toward-death? What is *at stake* in such a distinction? We die. We all die; the stake burns. Spectres arise. Chris Jordan’s photo series of dead albatross bodies on the Midway Atoll islands offer another example of how these hauntings may be initiated by an orientation toward animal death (see Chapter 1). Steve Baker’s series *Norfolk Roadkill, Mainly* is similar to Jordan’s in the photographic capture of dead animal bodies, though the

roadkill make this less a surprising series of deaths than Jordan's being-with/dying-with plastic of the albatross. Roadkill is unique in that it exposes us to deaths we are often directly entangled with in everyday life, and yet these deaths remain invisible and largely unacknowledged. In an interview with Susan McHugh about this series, Baker quotes artist Angela Singer as an influence: "The animal, having no grave site, no bodily burial, becomes its own memorial" (McHugh). Baker's photos, captured with the date and location, bear witness to each particular, individual animal death and its embodied memorial. The animal bodies range in their level of decomposition, sometimes only eerily referring to what must once have been an organic body, now just "ghostly stains and remains of just a few bits of fur, feather, bone" (McHugh). Each photo is also juxtaposed with an image of medieval architecture or some other disparate fragment of artwork in order to create a higher level of complexity relating to a humanimal sense of art and place. Further, these visual logs of dead animal bodies are encountered by Baker as a kind of autobiographical tracing, or what he refers to as a "peculiar kind of travelogue" of "unwelcome interruptions" while biking throughout his hometown in Maine (McHugh).

Perhaps while moving beyond this photographic witnessing to/entangling with animal death, we can take these hauntings and their wounds with us to acknowledge and enable a gift of being to *living* animal bodies. But how should we compose photos of living animals to make them vibrate with a sensation of the living without grasping and objectifying? In *Memoires of the Blind*, Derrida reflects on a

blindness that is “an essence of the eye” to which we are not typically attuned: “The blindness that opens the eye is not the one that darkens vision. The revelatory or apocalyptic blindness, the blindness that reveals the very truth of the eyes, would be the gaze veiled by tears” (127). Britta Jaschinski’s animal photographs are excellent



Figure 21. Photograph of a zoo giraffe. Britta Jaschinski; Web.

examples of how this “apocalyptic blindness” might be performed in visual media. Jaschinski gives back to animals their movement and darkness while giving us, the viewers, a veiled kind of looking, as if our eyes were filled with tears in such an attempt. We get a sense of the haunting wounds in this humanimal-animal entanglement, wounds that deepen and resonate with this looking. Animals in Jaschinski’s photos remain out of focus, out of frame, blurred in movement and hidden in that which exceeds the photograph’s sight. As viewers, we are simultaneously seeing and not seeing: a giraffe’s elegant silhouette; the blurred

stripes of a tiger bowing its head; the texture of an elephant's trunk as it confronts the lens (behind this lens, our bodies—and connecting them this photographic materiality), its face in shadow except for one small eye. What does *this* elephant see? In Jaschinski's photographs, looking becomes more like an act of feeling-with; images come to resemble the caress of ultrasonography, revealing a murky, mysterious image of inner enfolding depths that betray any discrete bodies and boundaries. In *Humanimal*, Kapil writes:

Notes for film: "A girl emerges from a darker space into the upper rooms of the jungle. Blurry photographs/transitions of light." How does this sentence go into animals? Notes for an animal-human mix: "Reaching and touching were the beginning actions." (27)

How do we create a photograph with flesh—yours and mine—made of the skin of light, the depths of an entire oceanic journey below? We seek its pulse, its vibration. We give it room to breathe. We let it run and hide.

Taken in a pedagogical sense, amateur photography is an excellent medium in which to attempt these conjurings of animal spectres and the entanglements of being that wound as they recede. Students can engage in visual travelogues like Steve Baker's as a witnessing of animal death, composed in conjunction with their own stories, attunements, or everyday encounters. Examples of this kind of witnessing/entangling already exist on amateur platforms. For example, Instagram user "jasonistaken" has created a series of such photos woven throughout his regular feed. We see moments of tenderness and surprise: a small grey



Figure 22. Instagram photo of pottery found on a beach in Charleston. 7 Jul 2013; Web.

bird lies on an outstretched leaf surrounded by four pink and yellow flower blooms; another bird is cradled in a leaf; yet another is left on the pavement and adorned with small flower buds. Jason remembers them for all of us with his organic makeshift memorials and the hashtag "#pleaseinventsofterglass." And if we look around his gallery, another humanimal pattern arises: Jason collects fragments of broken things he finds while walking on the beach. The undecidable shore—where dead and dying marine animals arrive as the living-almost-dead, where composition pedagogy has become anchored—delivers treasures that hint of a deeper sea of

being. How do we capture something fleeting like the ebbing tide or the pulse of a life flitting by? How do we taste its salt and feel its quiver? These fragments of bone, china, sea glass, teeth and pottery call us forth to the sea and to the whale fall below. A collection of these disembodied fragments drawn together into a new patchwork body that tangles and vibrates with a sensation larger than itself is another potential humanimal project.

This project and the pedagogy enfolded within offer a crucial deepening component to rhetorical studies. Whether “ascending downward” by earth or by sea, our material-discursive practices and the cuts they enact create our shared quantum, biological, material reality. To embrace the imund, to feel-with the whale fall in visual culture, these vibrations reach beyond thresholds and seek alternative matterings and, in doing so, have ethical implications. Barad emphasizes these implications when she describes how “a delicate tissue of ethicality runs through the marrow of being” (396). Delicate tissues tear. The alternate autobiographies and images I propose for a HumAnimal pedagogy are performative intra-actions that question what we mean when we say “human,” when we say “animal,” when we say “I.” These are the “small cuts” that matter. As Catherine Chalmers reminds us, “we have been drawing lines in the sand forever,” perhaps “now is a good time to reimagine what’s on the other side” (Chalmers). What is on the other side in these shifting sands of being flows back through our own materiality. What is on the other side is the animal “I,” the dead and dying “I,” the spectres of a fragmented “I” that we

must attempt to conjure with each incoming tide, or we must plunge into the ocean after them. I will swim all the way out and let it take me under, knowing that in that deep, I am enfolded in the tumultuous rhetoricity of life. I echo Kapil here, wanting to write until these animal spectres begin to breathe, “opening their mouths in the space next to writing” (41). The vague, dark, haunting sketch that chases this breath is what I am following: a being imund with joy.



Figure 23. Instagram photo of a makeshift bird memorial. jasonistaken; 14 Oct 2014; Web.

NOTES

Chapter One

1. See Stacy Alaimo *Bodily Natures: Science, Environment, and the Material Self*.
2. Humanimal has been used as a term elsewhere and is not of my own creation, including the poetic account of two real children found living amongst wolves: *Humanimal: A Project for Future Children* by Bhanu Kapil (from which I quote at length in Chapter 5). In the introduction of Cary Wolfe's *Posthumanism*, W.J.T. Mitchell also suggests this term as a new way of referring to humans. I use the term here to avoid the awkward "cutting" forward slash that I might otherwise use in some form of hum/an/imal. I also prefer it to otherwise labeling animals as "nonhuman animals," which is common, and which leaves the "human" perfectly intact and unaffected by this critical interaction of human and animal (as in: humans and nonhuman animals). From this point on, I will capitalize the letters "H" and "A" in HumAnimal when specifically referring to its use within rhetorical studies. This special case of selective capitalization illuminates the critical juncture of "Human" and "Animal" within the field. In all other cases, "humanimal" will be used.
3. See Karen Barad *Meeting the Universe Halfway*.
4. See Elizabeth Kolbert's *The Sixth Extinction: An Unnatural History*.
5. With the demonstrated concentration of 580,000 pieces of plastic waste per square kilometer.

6. Benthos organisms occupy the very deepest spaces in the ocean. They are sustained by the death of other organisms that often drift down from a higher oceanic layer (See Chapter 4).
7. A more precise statistic for animals killed annually is difficult to determine with numbers ranging from nine billion “land” animals to 56 billion “farm” animals to 150 billion animals (total) slaughtered. According to the USDA, nearly 10.2 billion land animals were killed in the United States in 2010.
8. In a 2011 issue of *Philosophy and Rhetoric*, Debra Hawhee, Diane Davis, and John Muckelbauer respond to Kennedy’s article and the possibility for reconsidering this inclusion of animals within rhetorical studies.
9. Complex: Byron Hawk’s *A Counter-History of Composition: Toward Methodologies of Complexity*; embodied: Jack Selzer and Sharon Crowley’s edited collection *Rhetorical Bodies* and Debra Hawhee’s *Moving Bodies: Kenneth Burke at the Edges of Language*; adaptive: Alex Parrish’s *Adaptive Rhetoric: Evolution, Culture, and the Art of Persuasion*; preoriginary: Diane Davis’s “Autozoography: Notes Toward a Rhetoricity of the Living,” and Michelle Ballif’s “Regarding the Dead”; ambient: Thomas Rickert’s *Ambient Rhetoric*; strange: Nathaniel Rivers’ “Deep Ambivalence and Wild Objects: Toward a Strange Environmental Rhetoric.”
10. See diffraction vs. reflection as a preferred optical metaphor and methodology in Donna Haraway’s *Modest_Witness* and Karen Barad’s *Meeting the Universe Halfway*. Barad describes Haraway’s genius in this shift from “reflexivity,” which “remains caught up in geometries of sameness,” to diffraction, which is “attuned to

differences—differences that our knowledge-making practices make and the effects they have on the world” (72). There are important resonances and patterns that make themselves apparent when reading evolutionary biology, behavioral ecology, and new material feminism across the common gradient of rhetorical studies.

11. See Debra Hawhee’s “Toward a Bestial Rhetoric” as an example of a commonly encountered reception of Kennedy’s general theory.

12. See Cary Wolfe’s *What is Posthumanism?* for discussion of Dennett’s functionalist approach to questions of the mind and consciousness. Wolfe clarifies how Dennett’s supposedly embodied, materialist philosophy of mind finds itself retrenched in the Cartesian privilege of the disembodied subject (33-47). Perhaps most critically for the present project is that Dennett draws a distinct *ontological* line between humans and animals and the significance of suffering, which results in the ethical implication that “human consciousness. . . is a necessary condition for serious suffering” (Dennett qtd in Wolfe 45). Not only does this exempt animals from ethical concern, it also denies the ability of “serious suffering” to some humans.

13. See Virginia Morell’s *Animal Wise: How We Know Animals Think and Feel* and Jeffrey Kluger’s “Inside the Minds of Animals.”

14. For an in-depth discussion of the nuances of thought within posthumanism, see the Introduction in Cary Wolfe’s *What is Posthumanism?* Karen Barad explains her position on posthumanism similarly: “Posthumanism, as I intend it here, is not calibrated to the human; on the contrary, it is about taking issue with human exceptionalism while being accountable for the role we play in the differential

constitution and differential positioning of the human among other creatures (both living and nonliving)” (136).

15. Representation and the resulting problem of reality within Western philosophy and science can be traced back through Descartes to Democritus’s atomic theory, where the *appearance* of the real and the “possibility of a gap between representations and represented” first make an appearance (Barad 48). The opposing views of scientific realism and social constructivism have both inherited this “common-sense,” representationalist framework of knowledge by presuming that “scientific knowledge (using multiple representational forms such as theoretical concepts, graphs, particle tracks, and photographic images) mediates our access to the material world” (48). These two views merely differ as to whether scientific study reveals natural states of being or culturally constructive states.

16. The academic journal *Biosemiotics* 6.2 is a special issue on origins of mind. See especially Yoshimi Kawade and Mario Villalobos.

17. The evolution of life’s origins is still a mystery. Many interesting developments in this theoretical research are currently underway, including geologist Mike Russell’s idea that a natural proton gradient created near hydrothermal vents in the ocean created the originary scene of cellular chemiosmosis. See Tim Requarth’s “Our Chemical Eden.”

18. This indeterminacy also gives rise to Barad’s issue with the metaphysics of individualism reinstated in “mainstream science studies approaches” that “take it as a given that social variables like gender, race, nationality, class, and sexuality are

properties of individual persons” rather than practices of entangled material agencies (57). Such theories, and we can include here speculative realisms, “fail to take account of the constitutive nature of practices” (57).

Chapter Two

1. von Uexkull’s *umwelt* characterizes the entangled ontologies of organisms and how each *umwelt* cuts differently. This is similar to Barad’s entangled phenomena. Grosz writes of Uexkull: “. . .[he] advocates an extreme perspectivism in which objects are not autonomous or independent sets of qualities and quantities, but opportunities for engagement that offer themselves in particular ways to particular organs and remain otherwise indiscernible” (*Chaos* 41). In Uexkull’s words: “Every object becomes something completely different on entering a different Umwelt” (108).

2. Following this trajectory, it becomes increasingly clear how such psychological criteria for rhetoric are themselves problematic. Even in humans, it may not be clear when “theory of mind” is being enacted. Such criteria would most certainly foreclose the possibility of ambient rhetoric, more generally, as well as much visual rhetoric. This further illuminates the differences between an adaptive rhetoric and a HumAnimal rhetorics that affirms persuasion created and received by all the senses.

3. The evolution of life’s origins is still a mystery. Many interesting developments in this theoretical research are currently underway, including geologist Mike Russell’s idea that a natural proton gradient created near hydrothermal vents in the ocean

created the originary scene of cellular chemiosmosis. See Tim Requarth's "Our Chemical Eden."

4. In Schilthuisen's book, he explains that there is a vast array of diversity in how, precisely, DNA gets shuffled around. Genitalia are organs used for the very specific process of "internal fertilization" (18).

5. Prior to Brennan's research, "generations of biologists" and researchers of duck reproduction had only focused on the more observable and extraordinary male genitalia (Zimmer). This brings up an important bias in scientific research (and all the assumptions that stem from it) for focusing almost exclusively on males. For further discussion and research of this phenomenon, see Erika L. Milam's *Looking for a Few Good Males: Female Choice in Evolutionary Biology*.

6. In one study that included a "unique combination of seven colored rings" on the legs of male Australian zebra finches simply as a means of identification, researcher Nancy Burley noticed that males who did not "pair off" for mating were exclusively those without red and pink bands in their unique combination. After they were given these colors, the males "instantly paired off" (Schilthuisen 59). This and other examples demonstrate female preference for certain very specific aesthetic characteristics that they "normally never got to exercise" (52).

7. Grosz describes this process further: "This calling to attention, this making of one's own body into a spectacle, this highly elaborate display of attractors, involves intensification. Not only are organs on display engorged, intensified, puffed up, but the organs that perceive them—ears, eyes, nose—are also filled with intensity,

resonating with colors, sounds, smells, shapes, rhythms" (*Chaos* 66). Sexual displays intensify sensation in each organism's entangled ontological becoming.

8. Derrida comments at length on the absurd singular of "Animal" in *The Animal That Therefore I Am*: "Confined within this catch-all concept, within this vast encampment of the animal, in this general singular, within the strict enclosure of this definite article . . . are all the living things that man does not recognize as his fellows, his neighbors or his brothers. And that is so despite the infinite space that separates the lizard from the dog, the protozoon from the dolphin, the shark from the lamb, the parrot from the chimpanzee, the camel from the eagle, the squirrel from the tiger, the elephant from the cat, the ant from the silkworm, or the hedgehog from the echidna" (34).

9. While eliminating parasites particularly threatening to humanimal health is critical, it is not so easy to make a clear judgment about our place in relation to parasites.

10. In embryology, the developing humanimal is initially referred to as "embryo" until the eleventh week, after which it finally gains the designation of fetus.

11. I remember looking at the visiting home nurse in surprise as she explained to us, "No, you do not have to sterilize the bottles after each use. Your son has to get used to the bacteria in his environment." Up until this point, I had imagined my newborn son as something like a sterile, fragile vessel—full of a purity that I had to protect. But he was crawling with helpful germs and would need more to acclimate to life outside his amniotic origins.

12. “Xenotransplantation” as a method of crossing this human-animal abyss is obviously not new. Animal testing is a good example of the issues that prompt this passage of human and animal ontological borders, but it is also a practice that reaffirms human privilege rather than questioning it. Animal testing is always done as a means for human progress and knowledge.

13. In “Individuation, Relationality, Affect: Rethinking the Human in Relation to the Living,” Couze Venn refers to Daniel Stern’s “vitality affect” of “non-conscious communication”—a “feeling-with” as primary experience (137-138). Venn explains how Stern begins with the individual, whereas Venn would emphasize relationality, from which individuals emerge afterward. This recalls Barad’s quantum entanglement and the rejection of discrete, static characteristics and objects.

Chapter Three

1. Studies of the female form, for example, included domestic tasks like carrying a pail up stairs and sweeping the floor. Meanwhile, the male form is charted performing athletic maneuvers.

2. “Nyan Cat” is this animated feline phenomenon to which I refer. The Pop-tart bodied feline has a website that tracks how many seconds you have “nyaned” to its endless soundtrack, and its video on YouTube has logged 125 million views since its upload in 2011. It has even won a “Webby Award” for “best meme of the year” in 2012 (slobs; “Nyan Cat”).

3. See Lauren Gawne and Jill Vaughan's academic paper, "I can Haz Language Play: The Construction of Language and Identity in LOLspeak," in the *Proceedings of the 42nd Australian Linguistic Society Conference* as well as Gretchen McCulloch's article "A Linguist Explains the Grammar of Doge. Wow." in *The Toast*.

Chapter Four

1. I choose the encountering look as the mode of unconcealment for this project rather than art or poetry, as the encountering look relies upon a physical encounter in Heidegger's formulation. It is my overall aim to connect our looking relation to animals in visual culture with the physical experience of humanimal and animal bodies, for it is these physical entanglements of being that are at stake, providing the exigency for theorizing a HumAnimal rhetorics. I will elaborate on this further as the chapter unfolds.

2. In *The Mother in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction: Psychoanalysis, Photography, Destruction*, Elissa Marder reminds us of the role animals play in Freud's theorization of death, sexual difference, and the psyche. Animal phobias, taken from clinical examples like the Wolf Man, are substitutions for fear of death and castration. From a psychoanalytic perspective, animals serve a complex function within the human psyche—they are "primal," and they become a passageway through which we reach that special status of human subjectivity. It is crucial here to point out that, despite the complex intertwinings of animals within the psyche, there is no animal "as such" to speak of in psychoanalysis. Marsden: "one of the

defining traits of being human is the incorporation of animal figures within the psyche; these internal animal figures are uncanny traces of our radical alterity and separation from animals" (60). Rather than tracing this radical alterity within the human psyche, which keeps us locked within the human mind, this dissertation concerns itself with how these complex entanglements play-out in material encounters with real animals.

3. See Mark McMenemy and Dianna McMenemy's *Hypersea: Life on Land* for the theory of "hypersea" in which terrestrial life is reimagined as sea life: "In moving out of marine waters, complex life has taken the sea beyond the sea and folded it back inside of itself to for Hypersea" (5). Also see Stacy Alaimo's "Oceanic Origins, Plastic Activism, New Materialism at Sea" for an enlightening discussion of this topic.

4. Of course, death in photography or in visual culture generally does not necessitate an encountering, "Being-enabling" look. Susan Sontag talks of the potential negative consequences that can be created by horror in photographs. Sontag's description of her own transformative encounter with images of death in the Holocaust may sound like the look in visual culture we are reaching for: "Nothing I have seen, in photographs or in real life—ever cut me as sharply, deeply, instantaneously. Indeed, it seems plausible to me to divide my life into two parts, before I saw those photographs (I was twelve) and after, though it was several years before I understood fully what they were about" (20). But Sontag talks of a deadening, numbing desensitization toward images following this encounter. Her description recalls a physical experience more akin to the violence and traumatization of rape.

While this supports the very real, physical and transformative encounter that can occur with images in visual culture, it is obviously not the gift of being we seek.

5. This is the case for many animals—sexually and asexually reproducing—though I do not wish to ignore examples of being that arise in other ways, such as the various theories for origins of life, which I elaborate upon in Chapter 2.

6. While Watson's group did not save the whales that day in 1975, this now iconic image was a radical success in gaining attention for their cause. With Marshall McLuhan as their "greatest prophet," Greenpeace thus began this strategy of "plung[ing] into the vortex of electric technology in order to understand it and dictate the new environment" (Deluca 4). In the wake of their success, other "radical environmental groups" began using the same public staging, the same dramatic image events of human lives risked, in order to attract attention if not immediate change (5). Change, though, has also followed. Deluca outlines a number of significant wins resulting from the publicity created by image events, such as the end of nuclear testing at a site in the Aleutian Islands by the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission, "the banning of commercial whaling; harvesting of baby harp seals; and ocean dumping of nuclear wastes. . . the requirement of turtle excluder devices on shrimp nets; the banning of the disposal of plastics at sea by the United States; and much more" (3). The difference between the creation of image events for environmental purposes and what this chapter reaches for is implicit in its choice to focus on Heidegger's *Aletheia*. Image events may bring more attention and even

change to important environmental issues, but the way these images are staged continues to portray animals as objects, albeit objects that must be saved.

7. See Debra Hawhee's theory of rhetorical vision, as images conjured by language, in "Looking into Aristotle's Eyes: Toward a Theory of Rhetorical Vision."

Chapter Five

1. Descending here does not mean to indicate a descent into lower forms of being. It does not mean to imply a hierarchal ladder of evolutionary life. Rather, it is a descent that reaches deeper into being, attempting to reinclude that which has been excluded. Hopefully this meaning will come through as the chapter unfolds.

2. The punctum is of course a very personal encounter. Given that Barthes responded to photographs after-the-fact, his experience would be quite a bit different than a trauma or wounding experienced in the creation of photo in which the self features.

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